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**MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS:
PATTERNS OF INTERACTION IN MENTORSHIPS IN THE
BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF SOUTH AFRICA
PROGRAMME**

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of

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Supervised by Prof. Johann Louw

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DECLARATION

This work has not been submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in this thesis, from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Shelmerdine', written in a cursive style.

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December 2002

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ABSTRACT

Mentoring programmes have become an increasingly popular solution to the problem of youth at risk. While a substantial body of literature documents the outcomes of these programmes, suggesting in many instances significant tangible results, there has been relatively little research into the qualities of relationships that produce these effects. The purpose of this study was therefore an in-depth exploration of relationship processes in the Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Africa programme, attempting to link these with some of the qualities identified by previous research as associated with strong relationships or positive outcomes. The sample for the study consisted of the mentors and mentees in eight relationships, established approximately a year before the research was conducted. Data was collected in the form of semi-structured interviews, with reference to a broad range of relationship facets, including decision-making within the relationships, activities during shared time, content and nature of communication, participants' perceptions of each other and of their relationships, mentors' goals with regard to the relationship and mentee, the meaning and value of the relationships for participants and contributions of socio-economic differences to the relationships. The data was analysed through use of the narrative method, with the intention of uncovering underlying values and constructions and exploring the interaction of these with more overt relationship qualities. Relationships were broadly categorised into two groups, namely those constructed in terms of a narrative of 'help' and those in terms of a narrative of 'friendship for its own sake'. Those accounts dominated by a narrative of 'help' characterised their relationships as unidirectional endeavours on the part of the mentors to effect changes in their mentees' attitudes and behaviours. They further suggested the presence of a number of relationship qualities identified by previous research as associated with failed relationships, for instance poor communication, lack of empathy, orientation toward change and so on. Those relationships recounted in terms of a narrative of 'friendship for its own sake' were characterised in their accounts as reciprocal in nature, and valuable in themselves, rather than in terms of any resultant change. These accounts further suggested the presence of relationship qualities previously associated with strong relationships or positive outcomes. As such, these findings confirm those of previous research and extend these by illuminating participants' narrative

constructions of their relationships and exploring the interaction of these with more overt relationship qualities.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Literature review

Mentoring programmes are becoming an increasingly popular form of intervention for dealing with the problem of youth 'at risk'. The stories of adolescents who have overcome difficult circumstances very often include a supportive relationship with a nonparent adult or mentor. Unfortunately natural mentors are becoming increasingly unavailable to adolescents – families, schools and communities have changed in ways that have dramatically reduced the availability of caring adults (Rhodes, Bogat, Roffman, Edelman and Galasso, 2002). For instance, with the rise in single-parent families, families tend to have fewer adults in them. Cuts in school budgets leave fewer teachers per child in the schools, and decreasing neighbourhood safety means that both adults and youth keep to themselves more (Tierney, Grossman and Resch, 1995). For obvious reasons, these factors are greatly aggravated in poor neighbourhoods, where 'latch-key' children, for instance, exist in significant numbers. With the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and the associated rise in orphans, sibling-headed households and so on, availability of adult support and guidance can be expected to further decrease.

A relatively large number of studies have documented the effectiveness of youth mentoring programmes in improving the developmental outcomes for youth 'at risk', generally finding significant tangible results. These include, amongst others, the impact assessments conducted by Barron-McKeagney, Woody and D'Souza (2001), Grossman and Tierney (1998), Tierney, Grossman and Resch (1995) and the meta-analytic review by DuBois, Holloway, Valentine and Cooper (2002). Tierney et al. (1995), for instance, conducted an impact study of the Big Brothers Big Sisters of America programme, finding programme youth to be less likely than controls to initiate drug or alcohol use, to hit someone or to play truant from school. School marks improved, youth felt more scholastically competent, and family and peer relationships improved in terms of trust, emotional support and intimacy of communication.

With notable exceptions, for example Rhodes, Grossman and Resch (2000), few studies have investigated the causal processes through which mentoring relationships achieve their results, which thus remain poorly explained (Phillip & Hendry, 2000). Drawing on attachment theory, Rhodes, Grossman, et al. argue that it is through the influence of mentoring on parental relationships that benefits to youth are achieved. In terms of this theory, children construct cognitive representations of relationships, based on early experiences with primary caregivers. These representations are incorporated into the personality structure of the child and influence behaviour in other relationships. Engagement in unconditionally supportive relationships is seen as facilitating positive changes in the child's cognitive representations, in turn influencing personality structure and behaviour in other relationships. In terms of this argument, it is further through children's relationships with their parents that a wide variety of developmental outcomes, for example in the areas of self-worth, scholastic performance and pro-social behaviour, are mediated.

The majority of studies, however, assume that such factors as guidance, challenge, skill-building, role-modeling and social support are the principle agents of change (Taylor & Williams, 2002). For instance, Morrow and Styles (1995), Sipe (1996) and Styles and Morrow (1992), amongst others, identify social support as the key feature of these relationships, promoting healthy development and offering protection from the psychological and health consequences of stress. Tierney et al. (1995) identify role modeling as the key process through which change occurs. They argue that it is particularly during late childhood and early adolescence that children form fundamental assumptions about society and their potential roles in it, based on observation of and interaction with adults and the adult world. Children who are provided with caring and concerned adult role models are more likely to form positive assumptions, leading to healthy development.

Studies of relationship characteristics

While the causal theory underlying mentoring programmes remains relatively undefined, some researchers have attempted to establish links between relationship characteristics and outcomes. Again, however, studies of relationship quality appear

relatively few. Those that have been done tend to have been largely quantitative in orientation, identifying qualities characteristic of strong relationships and linking these with programme outcomes (DuBois & Neville, 1997; Herrera, 1999; Herrera, Sipe and McClanahan, 2000; Rhodes, Bogat, et al., 2002). These studies have identified a number of relationship qualities strongly associated with positive change. For instance, closeness, emotional and instrumental support, and mentor's sensitivity and responsiveness to youth's needs and circumstances, as well as empathy and the development of a trusting and respectful atmosphere have all been linked to positive development. So have mentees' perceptions of their relationships as high quality and of their mentors as friends rather than teachers, as well as other relationship characteristics such as the level of structure, activity, continuity and consistency, the amount of time spent together and duration of relationships longer than twelve months. Conversely, adult over-control and short duration of relationships have been found to be associated with negative outcomes (Rhodes, 2002a).

While exact causal processes remain unarticulated, researchers generally agree that the strength of the relationships is fundamental to setting the process of change in motion. Quality of relationships with adults is in fact considered to be of fundamental importance to any developmental setting (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2002). It further appears that, while unique in many ways, mentoring relationships, in order to effect positive changes in youth, must have the qualities applicable to any meaningful relationship, and that unless meaningful connections are established, these relationships may be of little value (Rhodes, Bogat, et al., 2002). The consensus amongst researchers is that the better the relationship, the more positive the effects on the youth (Herrera, 1999). In the words of Rhodes (2002c, What is the bottom line?, para. 2), "It is the quality of the relationships that are forged and the degree to which they inspire hope that are at the heart of change."

Research further suggests that the longer the relationship, the greater the benefits to youth (Grossman & Rhodes, 2000 and Rhodes, Bogat, et al., 2002). According to Grossman and Rhodes, once mentoring relationships become established, they are likely to increase in effectiveness with time. Furthermore, they argue, the complexity of the change process is such that it is likely that change will only occur over relatively long periods. However, the evidence is that frequency of contact tends to

decrease in longer-term mentorships, and thus the full benefits of mature mentoring relationships may rarely be realised (DuBois & Neville, 1997). In fact, more than half of these relationships dissolve after only a few months.

Unfortunately, while relationships of long duration appear to be associated with increased benefits, there is also evidence to support the idea that relationships of short duration may be detrimental to youth (Grossman & Rhodes, 2000). Due to the personally intensive nature of mentoring interventions, youth may be particularly vulnerable to terminations, in a way that does not apply to other forms of intervention. Those referred to relationship interventions, in particular, may be especially vulnerable due to previous experiences, such as the loss of regular contact with a non-residential parent or rejection in their parental relationships. Such youth may interpret ambiguous cues more readily as rejection or feel responsible for relationship failure. Grossman and Rhodes further point to the fact that irrespective of the above potential vulnerabilities, all adolescents may be particularly susceptible in this regard, adolescence being a stage during which issues of acceptance and rejection are frequently of particular relevance in youth's lives. Feelings of disappointment and rejection may further lead to a range of negative developmental outcomes, in the domains of emotional and behavioural outcomes as well as academic achievement.

It is thus imperative that the qualities of mentoring relationships be better understood, not only to produce knowledge for programme practices but to reduce the number of terminated relationships and to sustain already established ones (Rhodes, Eoghat, et al., 2002). A number of studies, therefore, have attempted to determine the qualities of strong relationships. Again, the majority of these appear to be primarily quantitative in nature (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Herrera, et al., 2000; Phillip & Hendry, 1996). Herrera, et al, for example, identify eight factors consistently associated with strong mentorships: engagement in social and academic activities; amount of time spent together; how decisions are made about activities; similarity in mentor and youth interests; prematch and postmatch training and support; and the youth's age as that of an elementary rather than middle or high school child. Of these, engagement in social activities was found to be the strongest predictor of relationship quality, defined in terms of closeness, and emotional and instrumental support. In this regard, the authors argue that youth benefit in multiple ways, including academically, from merely

having someone spend time and display an interest in them. Direct academic help, while less strongly associated with overall relationship quality, was found to be appreciated by mentees, encouraging them to approach their mentors more freely for help in this regard. It was further found frequently to serve as an 'ice-breaker' during the earlier stages of relationship development. Shared interests between mentor and mentee, confirmed by the work of Grossman and Rhodes, also emerged as an important result of this study. Those partners who shared interests reported considerably stronger relationships more often than those who did not. As in all the literature reviewed here, however, mentors' sensitivity and responsiveness to their mentees' needs were found to be paramount, satisfaction being dependant on their cognisance of youth's preferences in the choice and decision-making about relationship activities.

Other studies have emphasised the reciprocal nature of successful mentoring relationships (Liang, Tracy, Taylor & Williams, 2002; Phillip & Hendry, 1996; Phillip & Hendry, 2000). Liang et al. criticise the above, more traditional understandings of mentorships, arguing that they are unidirectional and behaviour-oriented. In these studies, relationships' effectiveness is conceptualised in terms of the mentors' success in intervening on behalf of the needs and deficiencies of the mentee. In a study specifically of female mentorships, and drawing on relational theory, these authors emphasise instead the importance of mutual exchange. In terms of this theory, qualities associated with growth-fostering relationships include mutual engagement, commitment and attunement to the relationship, authenticity, or the acquisition of knowledge of self and other, and the ability to be genuine within the relationship. Empowerment, or feeling personally strengthened, encouraged and inspired to take action are emphasised as key relationship attributes. The mentor's ability to listen, understand and affirm the knowledge of his or her mentee, rather than to "pass down" advice, models of behaviour, and so on, is further noted as an important quality of successful relationships. Engagement in a positive relationship is seen as mediating stress and depression, as well as improving and encouraging self-esteem, self-actualisation, co-operation and relationship satisfaction, and reducing interpersonal distress. Furthermore, the qualities of engagement, authenticity and empowerment in themselves produce positive outcomes.

Insight has also been provided into the reasons for which mentoring relationships founder and sometimes terminate. According to Rhodes and Grossman (2000) and Rhodes (2002a), discouragement due to mentors' interpretations of youth reticence as lack of appreciation, and to fear of failure, as well as mentor burnout and the requirement for personal investment in excess of initial expectations, have been cited as amongst the most common reasons for premature termination of these relationships.

Race and the quality of relationships

A further issue commonly discussed in the literature on mentoring is that of cross-race as opposed to same-race matching. While only fifteen to twenty percent of mentors in programmes in the United States are from minority groupings, the same is true of approximately fifty percent of youth who apply for a mentor. Thus, rather than sentencing these youth to extended periods on waiting lists, some of whom may even age out of eligibility for the programme before being matched, cross-race matches are frequently made (Rhodes, 2002b). Rhodes, in her discussion of these issues, summarises the arguments for and against cross-race matching as follows. It has been suggested that white mentors are unable to empathise with minority youth due to an inability to understand the experiences associated with internalising prejudice, such as low self-esteem and little hope for future opportunities. It has been further argued that they are vulnerable to guilt and other negative emotions resulting from a history of racial prejudice and may therefore attempt to 'save' their mentees, rather than focusing on the development of a trusting and supportive friendship. Minority mentees may feel judged by their white mentors, on the basis of negative stereotypes, and white mentors may subconsciously impose their cultural values, thereby undermining their mentees' cultural identities.

However, research has shown, for instance Herrera et al (2000), Jucovy (2002) and Morrow and Styles (1995), that there are no significant differences in either the qualities or outcomes of cross-race and same race matches. It is further suggested that it is the personal characteristics of mentors that are important, and their sensitivity to and awareness of the nuances of cultural meanings, as well as common interests shared by relationship partners.

Socio-economic differences are also claimed to cause greater problems for relationships than racial differences. It is argued in this regard that, since mentors have been shown to have effectively overcome these, they can similarly overcome any problems associated with racial difference. Rhodes (2002b), however, cautions that the findings in this regard are based on small samples in programmes with a high degree of match supervision and support. She suggests, therefore, that cross-race matches appear to be beneficial under the right conditions, but argues for the importance of mentor training in cultural awareness.

In-depth qualitative studies

While there is, therefore, some literature documenting the qualities of mentoring relationships, very few in-depth qualitative studies of relationship processes exist. DuBois et al. (2002) observe that it is important not to overlook the differences between naturally occurring relationships and the artificially created ones provided by intervention programmes. Programmatically-created relationships are formed and maintained under very different circumstances. There is thus a necessity for detailed qualitative studies of relationship processes under programme conditions.

Beam, Chen and Greenberger (2002) conducted such a study, claiming that strong mentorships possess some of the qualities of parental and some of those of peer relationships. They are thus unique in this sense, peer-like in their non-judgemental nature and provision of nonpunitive fun, with consequently greater potential for disclosure on the part of the mentee, and parent-like in their ability to provide the kind of support that peers usually cannot provide, for instance role modelling and guidance. These authors established a further distinction between those mentors identified by their mentees as “truly key”, the strongest available rating within their questionnaire, and other mentors. This distinction appeared to be based not only on the amount of support provided by the relationship, but also on the manner in which the mentors had become important in their mentees’ lives. In this regard, it was found that strong relationships did not form because the youth was experiencing social problems, but rather because the mentor took an interest in the child due to his or her

personal qualities. In fact, these mentors frequently cited as the reason for their involvement the fact that their mentees were fun to be with.

These findings suggest an element of reciprocity in positive relationships. This is confirmed by Phillip and Hendry (2000, 1996), who emphasise the benefits of mentoring relationships not only for mentees but for mentors also. Identified benefits to mentors include the provision of 'cultural capital', in the form of opportunity to develop an understanding of the experiences of youth and to learn from these for themselves, as well as to develop experience and expertise as exceptional adults. Such understanding may further afford the mentor the opportunity to make sense of and re-evaluate their own experiences, as well as to develop cross-generational friendships. Learning in these relationships is thus conceptualised as a reciprocal process, rather than a unidirectional one, in terms of which only mentees can learn from their mentors. It was in fact found that youth's perceptions of the relationships as reciprocal were an important factor in positive relationship quality. Youth in these studies were found to perceive the benefits they had received from their relationships in terms of the opportunity to engage in an equal relationship with an adult, and thus having been able to exert more personal control than possible in their other adult relationships. The equality and empathy in these relationships were found to engender greater intimacy and personal confidences.

Styles and Morrow (1996) analysed relationship processes in Linking Lifetimes programmes, and Morrow and Styles (1995) in the Big Brothers Big Sisters of America programme. The study of the Linking Lifetimes programmes found that interactional styles, rather than particular relationship activities were what distinguished strong relationships. Most important in this regard was found to be the mentor's ability to identify areas in which the mentee needed help, and to find ways of offering this help acceptable to the mentee. Of further importance was the extent to which they allowed their mentees to determine the nature of the relationship and their role within their lives. Youth in satisfied relationships, for instance, were able to determine if and when personal information would be divulged and to participate in decisions regarding what activities the pair would engage in. The reverse appeared to be the case in those relationships in which pair members were dissatisfied with the relationship. In these relationships mentors tended to be prescriptive in determining

the areas and ways in which they would help their mentees, as well as in deciding on relationship activities. They tended, for instance, to require their mentees early on in their relationships to discuss sensitive topics such as school failure or family problems. A degenerative process ensued in these cases, youth tending to withdraw from the relationships.

Morrow and Styles's study of relationships in the Big Brothers Big Sisters of America programme (1995), and the one which was used as a guide for the present study, produced very similar results to those described above. This study classified relationships as either 'developmental' or 'prescriptive', 'developmental' relationships being the more effective type. These were relationships in which the adult focused on providing youth with a safe space within which they could focus on a broad range of developmental tasks, for example the development of emotional well-being, social skills or simply exposure to a range of recreational and cultural activities. Mentors within these relationship types were flexible in their responses to youth and adjusted their expectations to fit their realities, circumstances and needs. They actively incorporated youth into decision-making concerning the relationship, for example with regard to the activities the pair would engage in, the extent to which youth would disclose personal problems and the ways in which problem areas would be addressed.

'Prescriptive' relationships, on the other hand, were those in which adults found difficulty adjusting preconceived ideas about their youth, especially in terms of the potential of their relationships to bring about rapid positive change. Decision-making in these relationships was prescriptive in manner, for example, activities, topics of conversation and frequency of disclosure were controlled by the adult. These mentors were found to be change-driven, with narrowly defined goals.

It was generally found that trust was established in 'developmental' relationships, youth initiating help-seeking behaviours, for instance divulging problems to their mentors, as opposed to youth in 'prescriptive' relationships, who tended to dodge conversations about problem areas after initial attempts at disclosure. Youth in 'developmental' relationships reported perceiving their mentors as a source of support, while those in prescriptive relationships did not. The vast majority of

‘developmental’ relationships in the study met consistently and created lasting relationships that functioned as a consistent source of support to youth. This was in contrast to only one third of ‘prescriptive’ relationships, the majority of which were terminated prematurely.

While there is some variation in the findings and conclusions of the above investigations of the qualities of strong mentorships, a common element appears to be the importance attributed to mentors’ sensitivity and responsiveness to youth, as well as youth agency within the relationships. Whether seen in terms of youth’s ability to participate in decisions about the relationships’ activities, and mentors’ ability to respect and respond to youth’s circumstances and needs, or in terms of mutual exchange and the ability to understand and affirm youth’s knowledge, these features of strong relationships appear consistent throughout. These findings may reflect the contention that the qualities of good relationships lie less in the adult than in youth’s perceptions, experience and interactions with the adult. Rather than the existence of a perfect adult or model set of practices, success lies in the mentor’s ability to be attentive and responsive to the youth’s needs and subjective experiences (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2002).

1.2. The present study

Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Africa is a mentoring programme, the primary purpose of which is to provide adult friendships to youth considered to be at risk of antisocial outcomes. This study undertook to investigate the relationships in the Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Africa programme. Due to the paucity of in-depth qualitative studies, as referred to above, and the recent implementation of the programme in South Africa, an in-depth qualitative study of a small number of relationships was embarked upon, with the hope of gaining insight into the processes operating within them, in the specific local context. Relationships provided by the programme take the form of professionally supervised one-to-one relationships between children and adult volunteer mentors. The programme is modelled on Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, established in 1904 and commonly considered the

model of best practices in the mentoring field. This programme has an international base, Big Brothers Big Sisters International, of which Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Africa is a part.

The decision to implement a mentoring programme in South Africa arose in response to the Attorney General's challenge to the Commissioner of Police Services, the Department of Education and Director of the Institute (unspecified in the source) to develop an appropriate response to the increasing incidence of crime in the Western Cape. The programme began as a project under the auspices of the Partners for Children Educational Trust, established in 1998 as a partnership between the Department of Education, the Department of Social Services, the Attorney General, Business Against Crime and Rotary. In September 2000 it was established as an affiliate of Big Brothers Big Sisters International (Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Africa, n.d.).

The programme is preventative in nature and aimed at children between six and eighteen years of age considered at risk of poor developmental outcomes. More specifically, the programme aims to target children in single-parent homes and sibling-headed households who lack parental guidance and support, children whose homes are characterised by domestic violence, sexual abuse, substance abuse, or other disturbances, and children showing evidence of antisocial behaviour, difficulty in parent or peer relationships, poor social skills, difficulty in trusting adults, poor self-concept, depression, resentment towards control and authority or trauma due to an event. Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Africa is currently running in a number of locations in the Western Cape – a children's home, two schools and in conjunction with the National Institute for Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation of Offenders diversion programme for children accused of petty offences.

Big Brothers Big Sisters is noted amongst mentoring programmes for the rigour of its guidelines and structural procedures. Prospective mentors who volunteer for the programme are screened according to international standards set by Big Brothers Big Sisters of America. Those selected for the programme attend a twenty-one hour mentors' training course before being matched with a child. The matching process is also according to formal guidelines, emphasising the child's individual needs for

particular skills or abilities. Mentors commit themselves to meet with their mentees on a one-on-one basis for at least one hour per week, for a minimum of a year. Relationships receive intensive supervision from the programme, both parties being contacted regularly by caseworkers for the duration of the relationship. The aim of this supervision is primarily to provide support to the relationships and assistance with difficulties.

The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of the interactive processes within these relationships. The recent implementation of a mentoring programme in South Africa has not provided time for research to produce information about these relationships specific to the South African political and cultural context. This study therefore set out to explore these relationships with specific reference to their location within the local context. Due to the apparent focus in the existing literature on mentorships on the behavioural qualities associated with these relationships, and a consequent lack of information on the underlying processes associated with these, this study attempts to move towards an understanding of these processes. It therefore attempts to answer the following questions:

- How do the mentoring partners construct themselves, each other and the meaning of their relationships?
- How do the partners' constructions affect relationship qualities? For instance, what is the nature and extent of the communication and empathy between them? Are mentors sensitive and responsive to their mentees' needs and circumstances? Are mentees able to actively enlist their mentors' help, and is the help provided acceptable to them? To what extent are reciprocity and equality elements of the relationships?
- What, if any, are the effects of socio-economic, including racial differences and similarities on relationship quality?

2. METHOD

As discussed, a relatively large number of quantitative studies have provided information about the outcomes of mentoring programmes. Some of these have provided quantitative information about the associations between the qualities of the mentorships and developmental outcomes. Only a few studies, however, have explored these relationships, providing qualitative information about their nature and the interactive processes occurring within them. This study, therefore, set out to investigate these relationships in terms of their qualitative processes and to provide in-depth information about a small number of relationships.

2.1. Participants

By the time the research was conducted, the relationships in this study had been established for approximately one year. Two exceptions were a relationship terminated after four months, and another unofficially begun a year before the interviews, but only officially part of the programme for eight months. Originally, this group consisted of ten relationships, however two were excluded from the study due to difficulties setting up interviews with the mentors, one because she was not in the country and the other because she had limited time available. Thus, the study group consisted of eight relationships.

All the mentors in this study were female, relatively well off, English-speaking university students. Seven of the eight were in their early twenties and one in her forties. Of these, three were white and five black. Seven of the eight mentees were female and one male. All were relatively poor, black, Afrikaans-speaking and living in Maitland Garden Village. Mentees ranged in age between nine and twelve years.

2.2. Procedure

Contact with the participants was made through the programme and through the school attended by the children. All participants were interviewed about their relationships. Mentees were interviewed only after initial contact was made with them in groups, in which participants and the researcher engaged in creative activities, such as drawing, painting and clay-modelling. These group activity sessions took place at the local school, where a classroom was made available for the purpose. Within these sessions, the basic parameters for the interview relationships were established, enabling more comfortable communication during the one-on-one interviews. Individual interviews with the children were held at fast food restaurants, at their request. All the mentors in the study were students at the University of Cape Town and interviews with them were conducted in coffee shops or other informal environments on the university campus, with the exception of two interviews, which were conducted at the mentors' homes.

Interviews were semi-structured and qualitative. In-depth qualitative interviews were deemed most appropriate for the detailed exploration of relationship processes and for gaining insight into the subjective experiences of participants. Qualitative interviews are sensitive to context, as well as to unexpected information. Both these aspects were particularly important with regard to the aim of this study to provide information about mentoring relationships particular to the context within which this programme is situated. Semi-structured interviews were chosen due to the fact that this study drew heavily on Morrow and Styles's prior research (1995), which was used as a guide to the various relationship facets. It was considered equally important, however, that participants be allowed the opportunity to name their own experience (Scheurich, 1997). The intention was therefore to strike a balance between that which the study required to know and that which the participants spontaneously divulged. Thus the interview guide (see appendix) was loosely used, and the form of the questions determined by the particulars of each conversation.

Initially, participants were encouraged to speak about their relationships "as they saw them", and additional lines of inquiry were developed in light of these responses

(Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998). Questions in the interview guide were designed to be as open as possible, so as to limit further the extent to which answers would be prescribed by the researcher, and to encourage participants to disclose also that which was unexpected. Again, additional questions were derived from responses to these questions. Wherever possible, stories about actual events and recounted conversations were requested. It was felt that these were most likely to elicit rich information and provide insight into the underlying values and constructions from which the participants' experiences of the relationships were composed (PANOS, 1999).

The following facets of the relationships were included in the interview guide, based on Morrow and Styles's research:

- activities during shared time
- content and nature of communication
- participants' perceptions of each other and of their relationships
- processes in the relationships such as negotiating roles
- mentors' goals with regard to the relationship and mentee
- the meaning and value of the relationships for participants
- contributions of socio-economic, including racial differences to the relationships

Interviews with the mentors lasted between one and two hours. Six of the mentors were interviewed once each, and two of them twice, since it was mutually felt that there was further ground to be covered due to time constraints in the initial interviews. Interviews with the mentees were considerably shorter, lasting approximately half an hour each. Again, one of the mentees was interviewed twice. This was due to considerable contradictions that arose between her account and that of her mentor, as well as to her apparent willingness to answer questions as she thought she should, as opposed to revealing her actual perspective and experiences. Thus further exploration was necessary to determine the validity of the data gathered in the first interview.

2.3. Ethical considerations

Permission to conduct the research was gained from the Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Africa programme, and the projected project approved by the Psychology Department at the University of Cape Town. All interviews were conducted with the informed consent of the participants and with that of the mentees' guardians. While children under eighteen years of age are considered legally incapable of providing informed consent, the mentees were asked for their consent, as voluntary and willing participation was considered fundamental to the research relationship. All participants were further assured of confidentiality through anonymity. Thus, the participants' names have been replaced with pseudonyms and other identifying features of their accounts have been changed.

2.4. The research relationships

Rather than a means of extracting complete and unchanging accounts of a static reality, interviews should be seen as practices within which fragmentary accounts of ever-changing realities are constructed between the interviewer and interviewee. These accounts are therefore specific to and inseparable from the particular interview, necessitating an understanding of how the interview relationship influences the nature of the information produced (Hutchby & Wooffit, 1998).

Relationships with the children

The research relationships, and thus the procedure for data collection, were established through a process of interaction and negotiation with the participants. This was intended to counteract the effects of the power imbalance between them and me on the data produced, as well as to develop a method with which the children would feel comfortable and therefore able to speak more openly. The imbalance of power was the result not only of the age discrepancy, but also of our respective positions within the social context and in terms of our relationship to the programme. Due to

my position as a white, middle-class university student interviewing relatively poor, black children, as well as my association with the programme staff, and theirs with its target group, a considerable imbalance of power was inherent to the relationships. The effects of these positions were further exacerbated by my collaboration with the school principal and the children's parents in arranging the interviews. These associations exaggerated my power relative to them, and diminished their ability to refuse to be interviewed. These dynamics in our relationships were particularly salient due to their perceptions of the interviews as intimidating, and are well illustrated by the story of my initial arrival at the school, before the commencement of my first interview.

My arrival was met with a clamour of expectant children, as well as a barrage of questions about the nature of my business at the school, and requests for money, sweets and that I "take us out somewhere". This illustrated, before I had even emerged from my car, the extent of their expectations, which were probably based on their observation of my socio-economic status, evident from the fact that I am white and was driving a car. One of these children was in fact the child I had intended to interview that day. Realising this, I asked her whether she would be available. She, however, informed me that she would not and promptly set off walking home. I approached the principal, hoping to arrange an interview with another child, but the response was to send someone after the girl, with an order to return. The girl dutifully but reluctantly did so, and stood silently waiting to be given further instructions.

The dynamics evident in the above story made available only very limited possibilities for communication between the children and me. It was for this reason that I embarked on a process of negotiation with the children, through which the gathering of data could be redefined as a collaborative venture. This opened up the possibilities for communication between us. It was decided that initial meetings would be held in small groups, within which we would participate in a creative activity. These groups would serve as a less intimidating forum within which we could get to know each other before holding the one-on-one interviews. Due to the lack of privacy at school and the children's discomfort at the idea of talking about their relationships in the presence of their friends, it was decided that, after getting to know each other better, I would take each child individually to a mutually agreed upon place, where we

would discuss these relationships. The snowball effect of what became very enjoyable group sessions for the children and me was that the school principal became less central to the process of securing the interviews, as they began inviting each other to join the groups, or presenting themselves for inclusion. We were thus able to negotiate the individual interviews amongst ourselves.

The group sessions not only provided an opportunity for us to get to know each other, but also a space within which the power imbalances between us could be challenged. Shotter (1993) advocates a position of 'not knowing' for therapists to assume relative to their clients. This can be applied also to research relationships, and can be understood as a way of listening and responding to the participants which invites them to articulate their world as they see it, and acknowledges their 'expert status' in this regard. I further offered, wherever possible, all the information about myself that I asked of the children, such as my age, information about the members of my family, where I lived, what I liked and did not like, and so on. This volunteering of personal information was intended to challenge their evident assumptions about the nature of our relationships in terms of our relative positions as adult and children, interviewer and interviewees. In sharing with the children stories and anecdotes from my own life, I was further able to construct myself in ways not associated with the positions of adult, interviewer, university student and so on, but rather in terms of the possibilities available within more personal stories.

Engaging with the children in creative activities further provided an excellent opportunity for shared experience. This mitigated the power imbalances between us and created a 'space' within which they could communicate with me about other aspects of their worlds. The children further became actively involved in setting up the interviews, taking me to their own and each other's homes in order to gain their parents' consent. This role substantially increased their power within our relationships. It is important to note, however, that certain structural inequalities between us persisted throughout the relationships, and that the power could be redistributed only to a limited degree. For instance, while giving the children the option to decide on the activities we would engage in did to some extent share the power more evenly between us, their choices also highlighted the structural inequalities less amenable to change. The children invariably chose the activities I

provided, illustrating our differential access to resources. While in theory they had the option to choose another activity of their own suggestion, in practice they did not have access to anything, in their view, equally enjoyable. Thus our relationships were throughout fraught with a tension between the relative equality possible between us on a personal level and the vast power discrepancies created by the broader social structure.

Our conversations in the individual interviews, in which the mentoring relationships were discussed, remained largely within a question-answer format, possibly reflecting those aspects of the power relations between us less amenable to change. Their answers to my questions did, however, in many instances reflect the freedom of our relationships as established in the group sessions. For instance, many of them were able to tell me that which they felt unable to tell their mentors, as well as to contradict me when I tried to anticipate their answers.

Relationships with the mentors

The relationships between the mentors and myself were relatively unproblematic. They were all university students and of similar age and class, the only exception being the oldest mentor. Our commonalities in this regard enabled us to engage as students at the same university, rather than only as interviewer and interviewee. Holding the interviews in places, such as coffee shops, commonly used by students as informal meeting places further enhanced this aspect of our relationships. A certain amount of time was spent before beginning a discussion of the mentorships setting basic parameters for our relationships. During this time, the focus was on our common status as students at the University of Cape Town. This informality opened up the possibilities for communication between us by reducing the restrictions imposed by more formal interactions, or by confinement to the roles of interviewer and interviewee.

Certain relatively minor power discrepancies did emerge between us, however. Their positions as mentors, relative to mine as researcher, appeared to provoke a certain degree of anxiety about being evaluated as such. This was probably due to the nature of the Big Brothers Big Sisters programme as designed to achieve tangible and

evaluable results in the mentees' trajectories, and their consequent feelings of responsibility in this regard. Drawing attention to their 'expert status' on their mentoring relationships, however, as well as explaining my interest in understanding rather than evaluating the relationships, helped mitigate this effect.

2.5. Analysis

Narrative

Participants' accounts were regarded as stories of the relationships, rather than as factual descriptions reflecting an objective reality. According to Stilles (2001), history cannot be separated from its retellings. Similarly, these relationships cannot be separated from the way in which they were narrated. People live in and through the stories they tell about their lives (Howard, 1991). Thus, the narratives in terms of which the relationships are recounted can provide insight into the lived experiences of the relationships and the meaning made of them. According to Dyan and Katz, story forms carry latent messages that echo the manifest messages of the event: "The story of an event cannot be told without form and the form carries meaning" (1992, p30).

The definition of narrative is subject to considerable debate. Some define it so broadly that it could include almost any interpretative method, while others restrict its definition to the assumption that all narratives possess the same features (De la Rey, 1999). De la Rey provides a summary, applicable to the mode of analysis employed in this study, of those features subscribed to by the majority of researchers using this method. Firstly, some level of sequence is generally considered necessary to constitute a narrative, whether by time or by theme. Secondly, and in the words of De la Rey (p. 96), "Not all narratives are stories in the sense of having protagonists, a plot, events, complications and an ending." Rather, they may assume multiple forms, for example, habitual narratives or topic narratives. The former refers to a narrative form in which events happen over and over again, and the latter to "snap-shots" of past events related to each other in terms of themes. The third property of a narrative in terms of this definition is that it tells how the self is constructed. Narrative analysis

relates to the ways in which people construct the meaning of themselves and events. Thus, in constructing a narrative the speaker simultaneously constructs a self, in dialogue with all those with whom she is engaged, directly, as in actual conversation, and indirectly, as through her relationships, for example, to historical figures or the media. In this sense narrative elucidates the nature of the self as relational and therefore constituted within the narrative context. Lastly, and on the same note, narratives are jointly produced through interaction, and thus inseparable from the cultural and historical context.

Analytic procedure

Interviews were recorded but not transcribed, apart from detailed quotes particularly significant to the interpretation. Analysis was conducted through listening repeatedly to the interview cassettes until patterns began to emerge. Listening to the tapes as opposed to reading transcripts had several advantages. Elements such as tone of voice were preserved, and recall of the feelings and intuitive perceptions experienced at the time of the interviews facilitated. Extracts pertinent to the emerging patterns were then transcribed and given further detailed attention.

According to Furman (1996), friends' perceptions of their relationships are typically only moderately related, each individual providing a distinct account. Thus, the independence of the accounts was recognised to the extent that inconsistencies or contradictions between them were regarded as providing insight, rather than as error (Billig, 1996). However, their relatedness was also acknowledged and partners' accounts were thus analysed with reference to each other. Each relationship, with its two accounts, was analysed as a unit, and individual aspects thereof were considered within the context thereby created. Once the relationships had been analysed individually in this manner, themes relevant to the broader emerging picture were drawn out and, where necessary, pursued through further similar inspection of the data.

A focus throughout this process was maintained on the constructions of self, other and the events of the relationships. According to Lieblich, Tuval-Maschiach and Zilber (1998) stories are constructed around a core of events, but there is considerable

freedom for individuality and creativity in the selection, addition to, emphasis on and interpretation of these 'remembered' events. Thus, through analysis of the types of events recounted, and the interpretation of these and the roles assigned to the actors within them, participants' accounts provided insight into their unique constructions and attributions of meaning concerning their relationships. Roulston (2001) further emphasises the ability of narratives to provide insight not only into particular situations, but also into the range of possible situations, events and characters within them. Thus, the potential of the narratives in this sense was further explored, with respect to possibilities for action, such as open communication, and for construction of self, other and the meaning of the relationship between them. To this end, silences and absences within the accounts were also considered.

Fragments of interpretation

Due to the impossibility of objectivity in the generation of knowledge, the researcher's standpoint is inseparable from the knowledge produced. The analysis of narratives entails the researcher's constructions of the experiences of others and the imposition of her own narrative on the data. Due to the impossibility of representing the data in its entirety, the process of analysis is one of decisions – about which aspects of the data are noteworthy, which are to be relegated to the background, and so on (De la Rey, 1999). Furthermore, the participants' own accounts of their relationships cannot be seen as synchronous with the actual events, nor their constructions as exact reflections of reality. Rather, they are particular versions presented for a particular audience at particular times. This analysis cannot therefore be seen as a complete account of the participants' experiences of their relationships. Rather, it is one of many possible interpretations of ever-changing events. This interpretation is dependent on the researcher's perspective, and responsive not only to the participants and their accounts, but to the broader context, including the theoretical one, within which it took place. From this perspective, however, of the impossibility of objectivity as an ideal, the researcher's standpoint becomes a resource, rather than a problem and simply needs to be recognised as an inseparable part of the analysis (De la Rey, 1999). The discussion presented in this thesis will therefore refer back to the methodological standpoint assumed and use of the narrative method in the analysis of the participants' accounts of their relationships.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Introduction

The relationships in this study can be broadly classified into two groups. The first group consists of five relationships, the accounts of which are dominated by what I have called the narrative of 'help'. The second group is comprised of three relationships, in which accounts what I have called the narratives of 'friendship for its own sake' predominate. This section serves as an introduction to these relationships, outlining the basic forms assumed by these narratives, and their relationship to the 'developmental' and 'prescriptive' relationships identified by Morrow and Styles (1995).

3.1.1. The mentoring relationships and narrative forms

The relationship categories in this study correspond very closely with the 'developmental' and 'prescriptive' relationships identified by Morrow and Styles (1995). While the relationships in Morrow and Styles's study were classified according to the practices engaged in by relationship partners and to overt statements made about goals and feelings about the relationships, those in this study were classified according to the narrative forms through which they were recounted. Thus, while comparison of the results of the two studies suggests that the categories identified refer to the same kinds of relationships, the method of analysis used in this study produced a very different form of information and thus a different picture of the relationships.

The first category is made up of those relationships the accounts of which are dominated by the narrative of 'help'. The relationships in this category correspond very closely with those relationships identified by Morrow and Styles as 'prescriptive' relationships. These relationships appear to be constructed by the mentors and

mentees within them primarily in terms of the mentors' purpose to help the mentees and thereby to produce in them the changes that are the programme's main objective for the relationships. The second category corresponds with Morrow and Styles's 'developmental' relationships and consists of those relationships the accounts of which are dominated by a narrative of 'friendship for its own sake'. These relationships appear to be constructed as friendships for the sake of the relationship itself, the mentors' purpose to help their mentees and the changes intended by the programme being subsidiary elements within them. They are further recounted in terms of a variety of sub-narratives, the focus of which appears to be the interactions themselves between the relationship partners, rather than the help supplied or any resultant changes.

An interesting discrepancy exists between the practices and overt statements made by the mentors in the accounts of those relationships dominated by the narrative of 'help' and those of the mentors in Morrow and Styles's 'prescriptive' relationships. The 'prescriptive' mentors overtly state their transformative intentions and frustrations with their mentees' persistently undesirable behaviours and attitudes. They engage in unilateral decision-making, pressure their mentees to disclose personal information and so on. Similar tendencies in the corresponding group of mentors in this study, however, are less discernible. The mentors whose accounts are related in terms of a narrative of 'help' often make the overt statements and engage in the practices characteristic of Morrow and Styles's 'developmental' mentors. The relationships in this category, however, are subject to the problems of Morrow and Styles's 'prescriptive' relationships. For instance, mentees do not communicate well with their mentors and are largely unable to participate in any decisions they are encouraged to make. Strong bonds and trust appear not to have been established, and so on. This section will give an outline of the two basic narratives found in this study, and will offer a possible explanation for this discrepancy.

The narrative of help

The narrative of 'help' does not refer to a detailed story paralleled in the accounts of all these relationships, but rather to an abstract storyline or 'thread' (Ross, 2001), animated in multiple different ways and with reference in each case to unique

characters and events. This 'thread' can be understood as a structure for organising these events and the characters within them in a meaningful way. While evident throughout the accounts of these relationships, their construction in these terms is made explicit in the following extracts:

Lara:

I: And d'you intend to carry on with the match after the year's up?

R: No...it's been...very frustrating. Because I feel like I'm doing this to try'n help her, and I so badly wanna do something, to try'n help her or just make her feel better or *something*, and I often feel that I don't, I often feel that I'm making it worse.

(1)

Kay:

And all my feelings of this, this do-gooder white coming along, salving my conscience for the week by taking some poor disadvantaged coloured girl out for an hour. Those are my reservations. At the end of it she goes back to where she came from...But hopefully she goes back with a few more, well, not skills that I've taught her, but at least that I've showed her, because look what you can get to in life, because she knows that I don't come from where I am now. I didn't start here. I don't know, I didn't start where she is either, somewhere in between, but, um, that I didn't start here...But that bothers me. She goes back to where she came from. And to all the beliefs and the attitudes and the things that she has to deal with. Ja. So its difficult. I don't know whether this mentor thing, from that point of view, whether it takes that into account. You know, coz I think to myself, you know, when she comes here there is a lot that she's picking up that's enriching her life. But does it stay? And is she able to integrate it? Coz when she goes back, ja, is she able to integrate it? When she goes back, she has to deal with her life again. And maybe the things that she gets from me aren't really helpful in dealing with that life. Maybe she slips back into old patterns and ways of thinking which are so effective in dealing with that life. And so being with me is kind of, it's nice for the time that she's with me, but it's totally useless for the rest of her life...I'm just wondering what effect do I really have on her life? Will I just be this wonderful, fond memory, in the *best* case - of someone who taught her so much? Or will it be just "Oh well, it was one of the things in my life that could have been nice if it had been more permanent, or if it had taken me out of where I was?" (2)

Layla:

L: Um, I thought she would be, she would be exposed to much more of life, and the influences of the relationship would affect the way, her morals and her values. Um, compared to the environment which she's in...Um, well, the community in which they live is quite, you can't say that any of them, they don't grow up with any morals and ethics, and it's just, they, they, they don't have, um, someone looking over them. They just grow up on their own and out and about. There's no guidance, basically.

I: And when you talk about morals and ethics, what sorts of things, if you had to give specific examples, would you have in mind?

L: I would say their relationships with others and the way they communicate with peers and, um, handling situations, like, for instance, um, um, for instance bullying at school. OK, that would be one, OK, that's one instance. They wouldn't walk away from the situation and face the fear, they would just act upon their instincts. Someone's hurt me, I need to hurt them back. They don't have any guidance, they don't know what is the

best thing for their future. They just go about and do what they want. And there's lots and lots of violence in the community, so-. So that's what I wanted for her. I wanted her to see that there's so many things to life that you need to know. And, and, especially social relations, the way you are with your friends, the way you are with adults, the things you need to know. I mean, even, even things like looking after yourself physically. Things, they don't know things like that. Like brushing your hair every morning, things like that. They don't have that mother that's there for them, and that shows them things like that. (3)

Veronique:

I: So, tell me, do you like having a Big Sister?

V: (Nods)

I: You do? And what's nice about it?

V: Coz she help you. (4)

Janet:

J: When I don't feel well then I don't talk much. When I feel little well, then I talk a lot. Then I'm a chatterbox.

I: Is it? OK. And are you ever a chatterbox with Kay?

J: Not so much...I can talk a lot of unnecessary stuff now and then...Sometimes me and my friends talk about a lot of stuff and it's unnecessary stuff, like jokes or so.

I: Ja? And howcome you don't talk about unnecessary stuff with Kay?

J: Because I feel uncomfortable talking stuff like that with her.

I: D'you sometimes feel like you're only supposed to talk about important stuff with Kay?

J: Yes. When it bother me then I talk to her...I feel more comfortable to talk to her about important stuff but unimportant stuff.

I: And d'you think that's because she's like your Big Sister and you think that's what a Big Sister's supposed to be for?

J: Yes. To talk about important stuff. (5)

The above quotes are some of the more explicit statements from the mentors and mentees in which they name what they perceive to be the most valuable aspects of their relationships. While not named as 'help' in every instance, the word here is used as an umbrella term encompassing teaching, changing for the better and any other intervention on the part of the mentor deemed to be beneficial for the mentee. All the above extracts thus locate the value of the relationships in some form of 'help' supplied to the mentee. Lara states, "I'm doing this to try'n help her." Kay and Layla, speaking of their doubts about the value of their relationships, refer to what they hoped to teach their mentees – "hopefully she goes back with a few more...skills...because look where you can get to in life," and, "I wanted her to see that there's so many things to life that you need to know." Janet explicitly states that the purpose of the relationship is "to talk about important stuff," apparently referring

to problems with which she needs help – “When it bother me then I talk to her.” The quote from Veronique, in which she cites help as the ‘nicest’ thing about her relationship with her mentor is typical of almost all the mentees’ accounts, in which my questions about the most enjoyable aspects of the relationships for them are responded to in this way.

The narrative of help, while animated in unique ways in every instance, has a number of features common to all these accounts, which will be elaborated throughout this thesis and can be summarised as follows. The narrative of help is a ‘progress’ narrative, in which the overall intention is to help the mentees achieve some desired goal state (Gergen & Gergen, 1984). This state may assume various forms, for example a greater commitment to schoolwork, improved self-esteem or a diminished inclination to use alcohol and drugs.

Narratives can be seen as making available particular subject positions. These refer to the ‘roles’ assigned to the various individuals within the discursive construction of “jointly produced storylines” (van Langenhove & Harre, 1993, p. 84). These roles, rather than being deterministic, are differentially attributed with rights and duties, and render possibilities for action more or less available to the individuals concerned. They further render the meaning of an individual’s action intelligible within the narrative context, the same action subject to very different interpretations depending on the position of the actor.

For instance, within this narrative of the mentoring relationships, the mentee may legitimately ask the mentor for advice on a personal matter, however this same action by the mentor would be considered highly inappropriate. Within this narrative mentors are ‘helpers’, mentees ‘in need of help’. In the words of Mary Gergen (2001, p. 57), “opposites cannot occupy the same position.” Mentors are actors, mentees acted upon. Mentors are givers, mentees recipients. The identities of mentors and mentees are thus constructed in binary terms, as antithetical to each other. Action in these accounts further travels in one direction only, from mentor to mentee, thus creating a unidirectional narrative. As helpers or actors, mentors can help mentees, but the reverse is not the case. Knowledge is presented in these accounts as the key to helping the mentees. Again, as opposites, mentors are ‘knowers’, mentees ‘to be

known'. Both due to their knowledge of the mentees and their lives, as well as through superior knowledge of 'right' and 'wrong', mentors are able to help their mentees. The narrative plot in these accounts takes the form of a cause-effect sequence, and events of the relationship are selectively emphasised and evaluated in terms of their contribution to this sequence. In terms of this plot, the relationship stories can have either one of only two fixed outcomes – success or failure, in terms of which the relationships and the mentors are evaluated. The evaluation of the relationships as such is in fact explicit, as mentees are assessed at baseline and periodically thereafter to determine the relationships' effects.

The narrative of 'help' can be seen as made available to the relationship participants through the context of their relationships within the Big Brothers Big Sisters programme, which is explicitly designed to help the mentees. The dominance of this narrative in the accounts of these relationships is not, however, an inevitable result of the relationships' context within the programme, as will be demonstrated by those relationships discussed in the following section.

Narratives of friendship for its own sake

While the narrative of 'help' is present in the accounts of all the relationships in this study, the accounts of three of the eight relationships are dominated by a narrative of 'friendship for its own sake'. The focus in these accounts appears to be on the relationship's status as a friendship, rather than as an intervention to help one of its members. This narrative can be seen as one which emphasises the importance of the interactions that take place between relationship partners in themselves, rather than in terms of the mentor's intention to help or any resultant improvements in the mentee or her behaviour. This is illustrated in the following quotes:

Feroza:

R: Just knowing that, you know, you've made a positive difference in her life. There's not much that she looks forward to, but I am like one thing she looks forward to. And I'll like ask her, "What did you do this weekend?" "Do nothing, just at home, " and that sort of thing. So... Taking her out, maybe for an hour or so. And we will go to the shopping malls, and she likes listening to the music, we go to the CD shops, spend *hours* standing there, so that sort of thing. She looks forward to that. (Laughs) (6)

And:

F: Ja, we talk about everything...Ja, she watches a lot of TV so I (inaudible) talk about, um, I don't know that programme comes on Thursday nights, um, something about the Guinness World Records, and the *weirdest* things you see on that (laughs), she likes to talk about that...And she likes to talk about 'Generations' and all the soaps and stuff like that. (Laughs)

(7)

Melanie:

I: Was there ever a time when Feroza really made you feel like she was your friend?

M: Ja...Adam went to, um I had to go fetch Adam by Jerry...and so we talked about stuff, and we talked about, and then she said, "What is Adam like?", and we talked about Michael Jackson, coz she likes Michael Jackson a lot. And so we talked about him. And we talked about what the people say about him and stuff like that, and it's not true. Because it's not that he changed his, his colour, and now people talks about him.

I: And that time, you really felt like she was your friend that day?

M: Ja

I: And what made, why did you feel like that? What did she do that made you feel like that?

M: Something in me that, that just caught a friend inside of her. (8)

Naefa:

And I told her that I'm glad she's my Little Sister, I hope that we can be friends, and stuff like that. I will tell her that, "I'm happy that you're my Little Sister, and I think that we get on well."... And, you know I would tell her, you know, "Thank you for the lovely day," or for the evening and for our time spent together. (9)

And:

I think one of the main things about establishing a relationship with your mentee is just being there, going to see her every week for one hour, just being consistent...and it's amazing, just your presence, just by being there every week. Because, you know, I think it's like one hour a week, you know, what is it? You know, you sort of take it for granted. But, you know, she's like, "How long can you stay today?" and, "When are you coming again?" (10)

Micaela:

I: What's the best thing about having Naefa around?

R: She always keep me happy. I'm never sad when I'm with her.

I: Is it? How does she keep you happy?

R: She always talks stuff I, I like

I: Like what?

R: About um, her family at home, and stuff...Her brothers is never naughty, just sometimes. Um, her mother want me to come visit again and stuff. (11)

And:

I: Do you like having a Big Sister?

M: Yes

I: Ja? What's nice about it?

M: She always learns us...And, um she show me stuff that I didn't even know...Like I didn't know that, um, there's a N1 City.

I: Oh ja? And she took you there?

M: Yes...And I didn't know there was, um a Milky Lane in N1 City.

I: (Laughs) Oh really! And did you go to the Milky Lane there?

M: Yes

I: And what other stuff? What else d'you like about having a Big Sister?

M: She learn me how to play Uno, she took me to her house. And I met her family. (12)

The above extracts provide examples of the primary importance, in these accounts, of the interactions between the relationship partners that occur for their own sakes. This is in contrast to the emphasis placed in the narrative of help on those interactions that occur for the sake of some future benefit or as a result of the mentor's overriding intention to help the mentee. While Feroza mentions making a 'positive difference' in Melanie's life, she constructs this difference in terms of enjoyable time spent together, which Melanie may not otherwise have, making no reference to resultant change. Feroza describes hers and Melanie's conversations, the focus of which are on topics irrelevant to the narrative of help. Instead, these conversations are held for enjoyment, without referring to intentions or results beyond the events themselves. Melanie describes the same conversations, citing them as the location of the development of her friendship with Feroza. Referring to an event, the primary focus of which, in her account, is their conversation about Michael Jackson, she says, "Something in me that just caught a friend inside of her." Micaela similarly refers to the conversations she has with Naefa on topics such as Naefa's family and brothers, visiting Naefa and so on, as the best thing about their relationship. In the extracts from Naefa she emphasises 'getting on well' and the time spent together. Rather than constructing the value of the relationship in terms of a cause-effect sequence as, for instance, in Kay's reference to the "skills" she has "shown" Janet, with regard to her doubts about whether they will be helpful to Janet in dealing with her life, Naefa emphasises "just being there". Thus, in contrast to those illustrating the narrative of help, none of these quotes appear to refer to changes or to benefits beyond the relationship events described.

The extracts from Micaela's account provide an interesting example of one of the ways in which the narrative of 'help' manifests in the accounts of mentees narrated primarily as 'friendships for their own sakes'. She overtly states that the fact that Naefa 'learns us' is the best thing about their relationship. However, she proceeds by

supplying examples very inconsistent with this suggestion. For instance, “And, um, she show me stuff that I didn’t even know...Like I didn’t even know that there’s, um, a N1City...And I didn’t know there was, um, a Milky Lane in N1City.” This inconsistency between her overt statements and the examples she provides can be understood as indicating an awareness of the relationship’s overall purpose in terms of the help that the mentors are intended to provide. At the same time, however, it may indicate that the relationship is not in fact played out in terms of this purpose on a moment-to-moment basis. It appears to consist rather of events, as in the conversations above, enacted for the enjoyment they provide, without making reference to any future gains that might result.

As evident in the above quotes, these narratives of ‘friendship for its own sake’ are composed of a wide variety of personal ‘sub-narratives’. These relationships are narrated, for instance, in terms of a mutual liking of Michael Jackson, stories about their families, or outings to Milky Lane. These more personal stories appear to make a wider range of subject positions available to mentor and mentee, who are not confined to the opposite positions available within the narrative of ‘help’. The resultant narrative is therefore not restricted to the unidirectional terms above. Rather, it enables action to travel in both directions, from mentor to mentee, as well as from mentee to mentor. As discussed, the emphasis on the value of the interactions for their own sake provides an alternative focus to the emphasis on outcomes that serves to construct the relationships, as in the narrative of help, in terms of a cause-effect sequence. Thus, while these relationships remain located within the programme, and are therefore constructed in terms of their purpose to help the mentees, the dominant focus in their accounts is not on their context as such, nor on this purpose. Instead, they are accounted for primarily as friendships for their own sakes. This can be seen as providing evidence of one of the factors Phillip and Hendry (1996) identify as fundamentally important to relationship success, namely the mentor’s ability to go beyond the boundaries of her allotted role and to form a personal relationship.

As stated, by virtue of the relationships’ context, the presence of the narrative of ‘help’ is evident in all the accounts. Naefa indicates that this narrative was the dominant one at the outset of her relationship with Micaela and relates how the relationship subsequently progressed beyond its constraints:

The first time I went to the school, I didn't meet her, but I spoke to the social worker and she gave me sort of her background and about this girl and her life, and that was a bit, you know, I thought to myself, "I don't know how I'm gonna do this," you know, because- And I just felt that, you know, I have to do this right, and you have to have all the answers, and there's so much pressure. And then the first time we met, it was a bit awkward. Because, um, I don't know, I don't think I actually had any expectations. You know, I just wanted to go into it, you know with an open mind, and then see what happens. I didn't want to think to myself I want to solve all her problems, or, you know, be like that. I just wanted to go into it and see what happens. The first time it was a bit awkward, because there were a lot of, like um, I think she had some expectations as well. Because I asked her about her family, and then she told me about her older brother who passed away, and how he was terminally ill. And I was just dumbstruck, you know, I just ask you, you know, I didn't expect, or I didn't mean for you to give me this overload of information. And somehow I thought that she probably expected that this was what our relationship was supposed to be about. I'm supposed to tell you personal things, and stuff like that. But, um, that was just the first time. After, um, I was also, you know, fully alert, and just waiting for her to give some cues, and then I could, you know, go and help her or something, you know, make her feel better. But after the first session it went better than that. I wasn't, you know, I was just more relaxed, and letting her speak, and- (13)

In this extract Naefa reveals how, at the beginning of the relationship both she and Micaela constructed it in terms of its purpose to help Micaela. It appears as if the expectations to which Naefa refers are in fact the same constructions referred to in this thesis as the narrative of 'help', which dominates the accounts of many of the relationships – "I'm supposed to tell you personal things," and "I was also fully alert, and just waiting for her to give me some cues, and then I could, you know, go and help her or something." However, she claims, "I didn't want to think to myself, 'I want to solve all her problems'...I just wanted to go into it and see what happens." It seems that this approach may have created the space for the interactions themselves to become the focus of the relationship. Thus, this mentor gives an indication of how the narrative of 'help' might come to dominate a relationship, as well as how this was, in this case, avoided.

Overt practices and narrative forms

While the relationships in the two categories appear substantially different when viewed in terms of the narrative forms that dominate their accounts, the overt statements made, and the practices engaged in appear, unlike in Morrow and Styles's study, to be very similar between the two groups. As previously stated, the mentors in

both categories frequently make the overt statements and engage in the practices identified by Morrow and Styles as characteristic of 'developmental' relationships. While one might expect this to be true only of those whose accounts are dominated by a narrative of 'friendship for its own sake', the following extracts from accounts dominated by a narrative of 'help' illustrate that this is not so:

Kay:

I: How do you decide on what to do together?

K: Oh no, I ask her what she wants to do. I put myself completely at her disposal. I say, 'Lisa, I'm your Big Sister, and I've made it my job as your big sister once a week to give you a treat. So this is it – you decide. You want to do school work, we'll do school work. You want to go to the movies, we'll go to the movies' – we've been to the Waterfront to movies, we've been to Camps Bay, we've been to my house, we've been to the Spur in Pinelands, a couple of times and had a cup of tea and a chat. But she mainly decides what she wants to do...What else is a big sister supposed to do? Except be there and give you a good time." (14)

And:

For example we spoke, I think this is a very good example to show the difference – her schoolwork. Um, and I asked her if she had homework to do one afternoon...And she said ja, she had a lot of work. So what she was doing, was, if she was going every afternoon to study at school, and she was doing her homework there. So I said, "Oh well that's wonderful." And instead of getting all anxious and wanting to know exactly what details, and if it was helping her, and is she managing? And, um, is there possibly something I can do? Which is something that I would do as a mother, I just, I said, Oh, that's wonderful. Are you sure?" And that was that. (15)

Layla:

And then they told me I should, I shouldn't expect anything from her, I should just do activities with her, and not, um, schoolish activities. Just, um, natural things like paging through a magazine, for instance. Just, just things. Maybe she would open up. And I took her to the Mall once, it was just, you know, natural kind of things. (16)

Regarding an incident in which her mentee, Veronique, had had a fight with her friend, Layla says:

And, you know, I just spoke to her about that, but I don't think she was much interested in that situation at the moment. She was listening to me, but she was like, don't go there, you know?...I didn't do much about that situation. I just thought I'll leave her to think about what I said. I didn't say anything to make her feel she needs to say something. (17)

Vera:

We went to go see a movie last week. And, um, I said to her, you know, "You choose the movie!"...And then she said, OK, well we'll go see that." (18)

Veronique:

I: Normally when you and Layla talk about something, does Layla choose what you're gonna talk about? Or you?

V: No one chooses. (19)

Berenice:

I: So, normally when you're going to decide what you're going to do that day, d'you both- Does she like normally say we can either do this or that, and you choose, or-

R: No, she said, what am I gonna, sy se dat ek moet kies, she says I must choose what do I want.

I: And then d'you like think of something and then ask her?

R: If I say, like if I say she must bring games then we play games at school, and she bring, ja.

I: What did you ask her to do last time?

R: Last time -- um, she must bring snakes and ladders.

I: And then did she?

R: (Nods) (20)

All these practices and statements are in keeping with those identified by Morrow and Styles as 'developmental'. For instance, Kay's statement of her intention to "just be there and give (Janet) a good time," and the 'voice and choice' attributed to mentees in decision-making about the relationship activities are characteristic of Morrow and Styles's 'developmental' relationships. So is the lack of over focus displayed by these mentors on their mentees' behaviour beyond the limits of the relationship, for instance with regard to schoolwork. The acknowledgement of the mentees' choice concerning disclosure of personal information, as well as of the mentor's role, as the adult, to initiate and maintain the relationship, as, for example, in the case of Layla not expecting anything from Veronique, are further evidence that these mentors enact 'developmental' practices.

It appears that the presence of these statements and practices within the relationships may be the result of the incorporation of Morrow and Styles's findings (1995) into the volunteer training course. The training manuals state, for instance, that, "As an adult companion...you will be the one who initiates the flow of the relationship and invites the Little to share and explore this relationship...You must commit without condition to your Little, accepting the responsibility, she may be unresponsive...You must allow the Little a degree of independence in the choices and judgements she may make." "Avoid the use of 'shoulds' and learn alternative ways to suggest constructive behaviour." "Scale your expectations about how fast the relationship will develop to

very small increments appropriate to the individual child's capacity," and so on. There is a suggestion, further, in the accounts of the mentors that the advice they have received from the programme, whether via the case manager or through the training course, has been in keeping with Morrow and Styles's findings.

The smaller sample and use of the narrative method, however, enabled exploration of the underlying constructions of these relationships, revealing an inconsistency between these and the 'developmental' practices engaged in by these mentors. While taking on board the advice offered by the programme, there appears in these accounts to be a certain degree of conflict with their more 'instinctively' based responses. An interesting insight into the processes operating in this regard can be gained with reference to the following quotes:

Feroza:

I was aware that 'Don't lecture, don't do this, it's gonna just put them off, so... I just say to myself, "Don't lecture, Feroza, don't lecture, just make them *aware* of the stuff," you know...Laughs...I was very aware of it. And we did the workshop, so we went through all that sort of thing. You know, don't impose what you think is right on them. "Do you think it's right?" and I ask them, "Do you think it's right?" or whatever, and they would tell me, "No, it's bad, we wouldn't do that" (21)

Vera:

And then I dropped her off, and there were also a bunch of girls, as we drove into Garden Village. And she said, "Ja, that's my friend," whatever. So I said, Well, d'you want me to drop you off here, and then you can go hang with them, whatever?" So she goes, "Ja," and she just gets out the car and she like walks away. I was like, "Don't worry, I just spent all my, like, money on you!" You know, that sort of thing. I almost don't know how to approach it. I don't want to make her say thank you, if she doesn't want to. And it's not really my place. I'm not, you know, if I'm the friend, then I shouldn't be, almost moralising. (22)

Layla:

When I'm there, there's always a few kids around her. I get to see the way she is. And, um, she's obviously much more open with them, than what she would be to me...But I'm not comfortable in the way she reacts with them at times. Um, very defensive, and very, um quick-tempered sometimes...I don't feel comfortable with it. It's like, "How can you say those things?" or, you know, um, should I tell her not to, or should I not? I just, I don't really do anything. I just concentrate on what we've been busy with. And I just leave it. (23)

Lara:

But I'm trying not to be like a teacher, or a don't do this, don't do that, I'm just trying to tell them what can happen, and-

I: So how do you try and avoid that teacher role but at the same time-?

L: It's very difficult, because a lot of the time I think I end up being like a teacher. I sound to myself like I'm a teacher. Um, I don't know, there's not much I can do to really avoid it. But I just try and, ja, as soon as I start to sound like a teacher, I try'n bring it back to them. Like I say, "Oh, but you wouldn't do that, would you," or "Have you ever thought about that?" or "What do your friends do?", or something. So I try and like keep it close to them. (24)

The first extract, from Feroza, describes what appear to be her conflicting intentions – to influence her mentee, Adam's, behaviour on the one hand and not to 'impose what she thinks is right' on the other. In her own words, she is "aware" that she shouldn't "impose what (she) think(s) is right" as she "did the workshop". However, her desire to direct Adam's behaviour remains. Instead of 'lecturing' him, she translates her instructions into questions with only one right answer – "Do you think it's right?"... "No, it's bad, we wouldn't do that." Vera similarly describes a conflict between her 'instinctive' response, to "make her say thank you" and her knowledge that in her assumed role as "friend" she should not be "moralising". Layla also acts on advice from the programme to "just concentrate on what we've been busy with," and doesn't interfere with Veronique and her friends. However, while she may have modified her outward reactions, her feelings about the situation have not changed – "How can you say those things?" Lara attempts not to be like a teacher but "a lot of the time...end(s) up being like a teacher."

This thesis will argue that, even when applying the overt practices of the 'developmental' mentors, the narrative forms through which these relationships are constructed remain unchanged. It will further be argued that these practices and overt intentions on their own are insufficient to bring about the kinds of relationships to which Morrow and Styles (1995) refer as 'developmental'. It appears from this study that the narrative constructions of these relationships by both mentors and mentees have at least an equally significant impact on the nature of the interactions that occur between relationship partners, and that the same kinds of relationships result, even with the enactment of recommendations based on Morrow and Styles's work.

3.1.2. Summary

Relationships in this study were classified into two groups, comprising those the accounts of which were dominated by a narrative of 'help' and those by a narrative of 'friendship for its own sake'. These two groups correspond with those identified by Morrow and Styles (1995) as 'prescriptive' and 'developmental' relationships, respectively. In the former category, relationships are characterised in terms of their ability to help the mentees, and thereby effect changes in their attitudes and behaviour. The mentors and mentees are further defined in these accounts as the agents and recipients of this help. Opposite subject positions are thereby made available to them within a causal sequence, in terms of which the mentors, through their relationships, either succeed or fail to effect change in their mentees' lives and behaviour.

Those relationships the accounts of which are dominated by a narrative of 'friendship for its own sake' are characterised instead as more equal friendships. The interactions between the relationship partners are portrayed in these accounts as ends in themselves. Rather than being confined to the terms of the narrative of 'help', these relationships are narrated in terms of a variety of more personal sub-narratives, within which a broader range of subject positions are available. These relationships are further constructed as reciprocal processes, the benefits inherent to the relationship itself, rather than in terms of future events it may produce.

While the above categories correspond to a high degree with those of Morrow and Styles, there is a discrepancy between them in terms of the overt practices in which the mentors in 'prescriptive' relationships and those dominated by the narrative of 'help' engage. It appears from the accounts in this study that the practices identified by Morrow and Styles as associated with positive relationships have been incorporated into the advice the mentors receive from the programme, and in fact taken on board to some extent, yet without the intended effects on relationships. It is the argument of this thesis that, over and above the overt practices engaged in by the relationship participants, the underlying constructions of their relationships exert a considerable influence on the form these relationships assume.

3.2. Narrative form and agency

One of the distinctions between the accounts of those relationships narrated primarily in terms of the narrative of ‘help’ and those in terms of a narrative of ‘friendship for its own sake’ relates to the agency attributed to the mentees in these accounts. This agency can be seen as directly related to the narrative forms, as will be shown in the following discussion.

3.2.1. Unidirectionality of the narrative of ‘help’

A notable feature of the narrative of ‘help’ is that it is a unidirectional one, as it is specifically the mentor who is intended to and perceived as able to help the mentee. In terms of this narrative, the situation as such is an irreversible one. The lack of agency attributed to the mentees in accounts of relationships in which this narrative is dominant appears to be directly related to the poor communication evident in these accounts. This is in contrast to the relative agency of the mentees and good communication described in the accounts of those relationships narrated primarily as ‘friendships for their own sakes’.

Being the receiver and the potential for action

The accounts of three of the eight relationships in this study were fraught with contradictions. Vera’s and Berenice’s accounts of their relationship, for instance, were starkly different. Berenice, the mentee, described their relationship as a particularly close and enjoyable one:

I: So what’s nice about having Vera around?

B: Because she’s, she’s kind to me, everything, she don’t keep something in her, she just, um, she’s telling me her secrets, and I’m telling my se- we sharing some, um some secrets to each other...Um, we have fun together, and we play, like, games – snakes and ladders – and she, we talking together and laugh together...And the last time we talked she said, um, her brother was sick and so she was, she took her brother to

hospital, ja. And, and now this, this Saturday (inaudible), so she said her brother going to Durban, to his girlfriend's dad, to his girlfriend's dad, yes...

I: And what kind of stuff d'you laugh about? Does she laugh a lot, Vera?

B: Ja (laughs). Because she play cards, and she, "Oh, oh, oops!" and she going like that. I was laughing.

I: (Laughs)

B: Then she make by Marlein, "Oh, sorry, sorry, sorry!"

I: (Laughs) So, she gets the card games – does she make mistakes in the card games?

B: Ja (laughs)...And just laugh the whole time. (1)

This is in direct contrast to Vera's description of their relationship:

V: Ja, but, the one thing about our relationship is, you know, OK, obviously at the beginning, you think, OK, they don't know you, it's gonna take a while to get to know each other and that sort of thing. But, in a sense, even though we've been seeing each other for a year, I don't know, I don't know if its maybe me that hasn't opened up, or her that hasn't opened up, but I don't feel we've, we've formed a major bond. You know what I mean? Which, it's a bit disappointing, in a way... (2)

Vera and Berenice describe what appear to be two entirely different experiences of their relationship. A closer look, however, at the narrative forms which run through their accounts, reveals certain similarities that contribute to an understanding of their discrepancies. When I questioned Vera about the differences between her account and Berenice's, she responded as follows:

I: The general gist that I got from her was that humour was like this big part of your relationship?

V: Really? (Laughs) It was? Oh- OK, well maybe I'm like really funny and I just didn't know about it. Because, um, you know that actually baffles me. Maybe she finds me hysterical. But, um-

I: She doesn't show it. Really, OK. So it's not like that.

V: Well, I would, honestly, I wouldn't say we go out and can ourselves, it's not, you know- I mean I do try'n make jokes sometimes, but it's not like really funny. And like, OK, I do sometimes – like we'll go to Century City and I'll park. And I'm very bad with my parking, I'll park here, and I'll sort of walk around and think, "I can't remember where my car is," you know. And then she'll think it's very amusing, coz she has to like take me to the parking lot, you know. I know she finds that hysterical, and I'm like, "I can't find my car," you know? Like that sort of thing. So I know she finds that funny, and- But I mean I get more of a- she doesn't really laugh that much, I mean she just smiles... (3)

It emerges that in both accounts Vera is portrayed as the agent and Berenice as the passive recipient of her actions. While Berenice speaks of "talking and laugh together", the examples she provides are consistently only of the things that Vera has said and of Vera's amusing actions. The same is true of Vera's account. She attributes equal agency to herself and Berenice in her accounts of what they do not do together –

"I wouldn't say we go out and can ourselves." However, she immediately reverts in her stories of what does take place between them to a unidirectional narrative form - "I mean I do try'n make jokes sometimes... And then she'll think it's very amusing." This agency on Vera's part seems to be taken for granted. For instance, her response to my statement that I understood humour to be an important aspect of their relationship, "OK, well maybe I'm like really funny and I just didn't know about it," implies an assumption that if there is humour in the relationship she must be its agent. This differential attribution of agency may account for the inconsistency of the two accounts. As is suggested in Vera's statement that Berenice smiles at her jokes but does not laugh, it appears that Berenice's lack of agency limits her ability to express enjoyment of the relationship and to contribute to their conversations. Her lack of communication in this regard further appears to lead to an insensibility on Vera's part of Berenice's enjoyment, with consequential implications for her experience of their relationship.

The following quote further elucidates the unidirectional narrative form in terms of which Berenice constructs her account of their relationship, and the passivity of her position therein:

B: Everything, everything I want is there, but I, everything is there what I need, and so she give it to me. (4)

Adam, another mentee, is similarly unable to communicate with his mentor, Feroza, about his reality, leading to what appears to be a substantial misunderstanding thereof on her part. Two very different conceptions of their conversations emerge in the accounts of this relationship:

I: And then when you sat and spoke about stuff – what did you talk about?

F: Yo, we talked about a lot of stuff – We spoke about things in his area – gangsterism, drugs, that sort of thing... and he said that its like rife in his area. And so I told him like, "Are you aware of the consequences of drugs?" and he told me yes, he is... I said, "Did your mother speak to you about these sort of things," you know, "Are you gonna do it, do you want to do it," – alcohol and that sort of thing. He said no, he doesn't want to do it, and he knows what's right and what's wrong, that sort of thing... I would normally just like say, "Did you see on the news, it was like a gun fight or something, and then we would talk about that sort of thing and he'd tell me yes, like they were shooting guns in his area and that sort of thing, ja.

I: O.K, so they actually cropped up quite spontaneously, or did you have an idea- ?

F: It's spontaneous, no it is spontaneous, I would just like, if I don't know what to say, like I'd think of what was on the news, what they watch on TV and that sort of thing.

I: OK...so those kinds of conversations were the conversations that cropped up, just spontaneously?

F: Spontaneously, ja.

I: So violence and stuff was like a big part of their reality?

F: Ja... (5)

Adam's account of these conversations tells a different story:

I: OK, when I spoke to Feroza, she told me sometimes she used to talk to you about like gangs and drugs, and all that kind of stuff...And was that stuff interesting to talk about, or also boring?

A: Boring... I don't like gangs

I: Ja, ja. Can you remember what she used to say about them, and what you used to say?

A: Like, "Would you do it?" and (inaudible) and stuff. And "Did you watch the robbery?" and stuff like that. I say, "Yes, but I don't *like* it," and I tell her, "I don't *like* it." (6)

Feroza states that gangsterism and drugs, as topics of conversation, arose spontaneously between herself and Adam due to the importance they assumed in his reality. Adam, however, describes his aversion to talking about these things, calling them "boring" and portraying his contributions to these conversations as reluctant responses to her questions which are of little relevance to him. Feroza is depicted in both their accounts as the active agent in their interactions. She directs their conversations, by introducing the topics in Adam's account, and by asking the questions in both accounts. Adam is the relatively passive respondent. These conversations are thus portrayed as unidirectional, with Feroza and Adam in the fixed positions of actor and acted upon, respectively. These positions further have considerable import for the potential for communication between them. In the above descriptions of their conversations, Adam has little opportunity to name his own experience, and is rather subjugated to the position of answering Feroza's questions. Feroza's belief that these conversations arose spontaneously due to the importance of these issues in Adam's reality can be seen as a misunderstanding partly explainable in terms of this pattern of interaction. Her consistent introduction of the topics for conversation, as well as his failure to introduce ones of his own, perhaps allow her to retain her conception of his world as characterised primarily by gangsterism and drugs, irrespective of his like or dislike for these activities. Thus, whatever standpoint he adopts on these issues, the confinement of their conversations to these subjects

does not allow her preconceived ideas about their relevance for him to be challenged or changed.

Janet's account of her relationship with her mentor, Kay is similarly unidirectional, and she is likewise restricted in her ability to communicate with her. In this instance the connection between her lack of communication and the construction of their relationship in terms of the narrative of help is more explicit. This is evident with reference to quote 5, section 3.1.1. Here, Janet tells of her inability to discuss "unimportant stuff" with Kay, as a result of her awareness of the relevance of "important stuff" in terms of the relationship's overall purpose. In two subsequent extracts she reveals, however, a double-bind within which she finds herself as a result of this purpose. In the first, Janet describes her response, or lack thereof, to Kay's failure to meet the programme requirement that mentors meet with their mentees every week:

R: We used to meet each other *every* Thursday

I: And now?

R: I don't know what's going on now...

I: And does it worry you that she doesn't, I mean is it bothering you?

R: Not at the moment coz I knew she got more work than me, than what I got, she got varsity

I: Ja, ja, OK. D'you think it's because she's got a lot of work at varsity, has she said that's why?

R: No – I mean like she's got a lot of work I don't want to bother her... Our school, you see (inaudible), the time I come here at home its past three, but the taxi's always late at school. The taxi pick us up in the morning, in the evening, its always late, then we got a problem, so I thought no, its out of the way for her, to wait for me every time.

(7)

Although Janet was clearly disappointed when she told this story, she passively accepts her perceived status as low on Kay's list of priorities – "I mean like she's got a lot of work I don't want to bother her" – and as a hassle to Kay – "It's out of her way, to wait for me every time." It appears that Janet's construction of herself as a burden to Kay prevents her from verbalising her disappointment at not seeing her. The following extract corroborates this interpretation and highlights a further area in which Janet is inhibited from communicating openly with Kay:

I: Can you ever remember a time when she really helped you with something?

R: *No*

I: (Laughs)

R: I never asked her. (8)

At the time of the interview I interpreted the emphasis Janet placed on the 'No' as an amusing insistence that Kay had never helped her with anything. It appears, however, in light of her subsequent statement, "I never asked her," and the above argument, to be rather an assertion of the fact that she would never ask Kay for anything. This can be seen as a highly problematic response to her constant construction of herself in this relationship as receiver of Kay's help, preventing her from asking for that which the programme is designed to supply. It appears that the unidirectionality of the narrative form within which the relationship is embedded limits Janet's ability to communicate with Kay and thus subverts the potential for her mentor to successfully help her. Janet can be seen to find herself in a double bind in terms of her interpretation of the narrative of help. She is unable to ask Kay for help when she needs it, due to her perceived status in Kay's life as a burden. At the same time she is inhibited from talking to her about trivial matters, which may provide the basis for alternative constructions of their relationship.

Agency outside of the mentoring relationships

An interesting distinction exists within those accounts in which the relationship is narrated primarily in unidirectional terms. This distinction is between the agency attributed to the mentees in stories about the mentoring relationships and that ascribed to them in accounts of events outside of these relationships. In the latter, the mentees are constructed as active participants, lending support to the idea that their lack of agency thus far discussed is specific to their relationships with their mentors. In reflecting on the fact that Berenice does not contribute much to their relationship, for instance that she smiles rather than laughs at amusing events, Vera states the following:

V: But she's, when she's with her friends, and like I'm with all of them, then it's cool, then it's like, then we all laugh and stuff together. (9)

Janet, in contrast to the passivity in terms of which she constructs herself in our conversations about her relationship with Kay, told the following story about her antics at school:

J: "This morning we had seven periods...and we like to make a fool of the Sir, man, playing and making jokes. This morning I told my friend, 'Bang that window.' She do it. And the Sir got angry at us, with this bang-bang to the window. I was put out for two days coz I was going on with the Sir. So, on Thursday... we were making fun, I couldn't help it, I laughed. Like so, he said, 'I'm going to give you three chances, you don't listen. Hey, I laughed, I said, 'Sy wil nie hoor nie!'. Making fun every time. Third time, the Sir took me out, here by my shoulder, he put me out, he throw me out, I was like sliding on the floor! I was sliding on the floor, all my friends were laughing, I tell him, 'Nee, Meneer!', I slide so out, with my book and with my bag. I was laughing when I got out. Now every time we take him for a fool. (10)

Adam similarly acquires agency and the ability to communicate about his world in his stories of events unrelated to his relationship with Feroza:

A: We sanding stuff for the wagons and stuff, selling the wood, and stuff, deliveries and stuff... And I, I'm always like to, like I go with Jerry, and ask Jerry, like, "I want to know this, I want to know that, I want to know that." (11)

In descriptions of their one-to-one interactions Vera describes Berenice in entirely passive terms. She states, however, that "when she's with her friends...then we all laugh and stuff together," describing her here as equally responsible for their mutual actions (van Langenhove & Harre, 1999). Janet constructs herself as the primary agent in her classroom story, in contrast to the passive position she occupies in her accounts of her relationship with Kay. For instance, she begins the story by introducing herself as the initiator – "This morning I told my friend, 'Bang that window'" – and retains the lead role throughout the remainder of the story. In the extract from Adam's interview about his experiences with Jerry, and in contrast to his descriptions of his relationship with Feroza, he depicts himself as the primary author of their conversations – "I want to know this, I want to know that, I want to know that." He further offers information about these experiences without questioning, and actively defines himself by taking active responsibility for his actions – "We sanding stuff for the wagons and stuff, selling the wood, and stuff, deliveries and stuff."

The lack of agency attributed to the mentees in accounts of the mentoring relationships is not, therefore, consistent with accounts of events outside of these

relationships. The implication of this is that their passivity exists in relation to their mentors, and that this passivity, as shown above, is a hindrance to communication within the relationships. This argument will be further supported in the next section, which will explore the potential evidenced in some of the relationships in this study for overcoming this problem.

3.2.2. Narratives of ‘friendship for its own sake’ and agency

Narrative forms and the ability to ask for help

The accounts of those relationships in which a narrative of ‘friendship for its own sake’ is predominant assume a very different form from the one described above and appear to engender more positive interactions. This is evidenced firstly by extracts from the interviews and secondly by the fact that the two accounts of each pair are notably consistent with each other, apparently indicating more effective communication. When the narrative of help does appear in the accounts of these relationships the mentees retain their agency and, instead of being associated with the undesirable effects discussed above, it creates a space in which they can approach their mentors for help should they need it. The following are some examples.

Marlein:

I: What is it that’s so nice about having a Big Sister?

M: To help me

I: To help you, like, in what way?

M: With my homework, and to show me where am I wrong, and where am I right.

I: Is it? Really? And you think that’s one of the best things about having a Big sister? And why don’t you think, um, I mean don’t you think your aunt, or somebody would show you, if you didn’t have your Big Sister there?

M: Yes...But a Big Sister is like friend. Then you can tell her secrets.

I: OK... just tell me if I’m understanding right. So your aunt will tell you if something’s right or wrong, but your aunt doesn’t know everything that you do because you can’t tell her your secrets. But your Big Sister, you can tell her your secrets as well so she can tell you if you were right or wrong in the secret stuff too. Is that right?

M: Ja

I: So you tell Daneel your secrets?

M: Ja... Like the last time, it was, um, the Big Walk, of the school. And so, um, there was a boy and a girl, a boy and a girl, and so they were kissing. And so I look.

I: (Laughs) And then did you tell Samantha that?

M: (Nods) (1)

Feroza:

I: Am I getting the right impression that the conversations that you have with Melanie are kind of, just kind of conversations where you don't necessarily- you just chat?

F: You just chat, ja... You don't know what you're going to talk about, but you just go there and you start talking about this thing and at school, and "I did this" and, you know, that sort of thing.

I: And you don't, the situation doesn't necessarily lead to you offering guidance and kind of formally being the mentor, it's just like a chatting, kind of-

F: Ja. But there will be times when she will ask me, like, "What would you do?" or I would tell her "Oh this is what I would've done in that situation."

I: OK. So she comes to you with difficulties like that?

F: Um, ja, sometimes...Most of the time we just chat. (2)

Naefa:

N: And I'll ask her, "Do you have homework top do?" And she does often come to me and tell me about her homework, and "Can you help me?" and stuff like that. (3)

In all three of the above extracts both mentors and mentees are depicted as agents. While the narrative of 'help' remains unidirectional in the sense that it is consistently the mentor who helps the mentee, this can be seen as no longer problematic in that the mentees are attributed with responsibility for other actions. Marlein, for instance, informs her mentor of the situation in connection with which she requires guidance. She assumes active responsibility for informing Daneel, and thus exercises choice regarding the areas in which Daneel will help her, as well as agency in enlisting that help. In the other two extracts, from the accounts of mentors, their mentees are attributed similar choice and agency, both asking their respective mentors for help. It appears in the above quotes that, rather than passively accepting the position of 'receiver' made available to them in the narrative of 'help', the mentees in these relationships actively take up this position when required. Instead of presenting a barrier to communication, therefore, the relationship's purpose to help the mentee highlights the potential for the mentors to provide, and the mentees to ask for this help.

These findings corroborate those of Morrow and Styles (1995), who found that mentees in 'developmental' relationships independently sought the help of their mentors, voluntarily divulging their difficulties and thus playing an active part in determining the type and frequency of the help provided. This pattern of interaction

can be seen to contrast directly with that evident, for instance, in Feroza's relationship with Adam, as above, in which she comments that,

He had a lot of problems at school and I tried to talk to him about it, but he just didn't want to open up with regard to that...I would basically have to draw things out, ask specific questions. He wouldn't like tell me, 'This is what happened' and... you know? 'What happened, Why did she do this?', you know, 'Did he do anything wrong? Is she always like this with you?' And stuff like that. (4)

It appears in the quotes from Marlein and Feroza, on her relationships with Melanie, as well as from the accounts of the other mentors and mentees in these relationships, that the narrative of 'help' is embedded in these instances within a narrative of 'friendship for its own sake'. This may account for the usefulness of the narrative of 'help' in the context of these relationships, as opposed to its problematic effects evident in those relationships in which it predominates. Marlein states that it is precisely because Daneel is her friend that she is able to procure her help with regard to her "secrets". Feroza's statement that there are times when Melanie asks her advice is in the context of her reflections on the fact that their conversations primarily constitute informal 'chats' in which she is not formally acting the part of the mentor. It appears thus that the narrative of 'help' may not have the detrimental effects on the mentees' agency when given the status of a sub-narrative, on which the pair can draw when deemed useful or appropriate, within a broader narrative of 'friendship for its own sake'.

Narrative forms and authorship

These relationships further indicate the kind of communication absent in those relationships dominated by a narrative of 'help', in which mentees are described as equal authors of their conversations and are able to tell their mentors about their lives and worlds in their own terms. The accounts of these conversations are in contrast with those in Adam's and Feroza's accounts of their relationship, for example, in which Feroza questions Adam about those subjects she deems relevant to him. In the accounts of those relationships narrated as 'friendships for their own sakes', the mentees are portrayed as more actively contributing to their conversations with their

mentors. This is evident, for instance, in their ability to raise topics with regard to which they require help, and in the following extracts.

Melanie:

I: When you and Feroza talk about stuff, how d'you normally decide what you're going to talk about?

R: We, I first talk, then she talks. She first give me a chance before she talks... We talk to each other. If I get a chance, she gets a chance, like. When I come into the car I talk. (5)

Naefa:

N: And, um Melanie has a younger brother, and I also, have younger brothers. So we'll often share anecdotes. She'll say, you know, "My brother was fighting with me, and he likes to tease me," and stuff like that. So I will, you know, tell her about my brothers, and you know, "You know, brothers are like that," and- So we'll sort of, that's something that we have in common that we can both talk about. (6)

Micaela:

I: And is there anything you really like talking to Naefa about?

M: How the day was and stuff, and if we wanna go out, and how Angelo (Micaela's brother) is, and stuff.

I: And can you remember the last time you talked to her about one of those things... what did you say, and what did she say, and all that?

M: Angelo is naughty and stuff, and so she said, "Yes" (7)

In these accounts, the order of the interaction between Adam and Feroza, above, is reversed. In Melanie's account of her conversations with Feroza, she indicates her ability to introduce the topics – "I first talk, then she talks." In both extracts from Naefa and Micaela, Micaela is depicted as the first speaker and Naefa as the respondent – "She'll say, you know, 'My brother was fighting with me'... So I will, you know, tell her about my brothers," and "Angelo is naughty and stuff, so she said, 'Yes.'" In this way Micaela, unlike Adam, has the opportunity to tell Naefa about her own experience in the manner of her choice. She thus authors her own contributions to their conversations. This can be seen as evidence of the trend identified by Morrow and Styles(1995) in 'developmental' relationships that mentees are able to exercise 'voice and choice' regarding the communication between themselves and their mentors.

Communication and relationship consistency and longevity

A further aspect of the communication possible between the mentors and mentees in these relationships is the expression of their appreciation of their mentors. This issue seems to be an important one in that it appears in a number of the accounts of mentors as either a source of great reward or of frustration. This is evident in the following extracts:

Feroza:

I: So her looking forward to seeing you is a huge reward?

F: It's a motivator, it's also a motivator...Coz I can picture how her face will look if I don't go, and whatever...So I don't want to do that to her. Coz she looks, you know? (8)

And:

She'll like stroke my hair, play with my hair, that sort of thing, so, ja (laughs)... Ja, she'll like hang on me, sit on my lap and that sort of thing...I just think that describing how rewarding it is, is an understatement, you can never really say how much ...Like I will tell myself I don't have time to actually make, but every week I make time to go. (9)

Naefa:

But, you know, and it's amazing, just your presence, just by being there every week. Because, you know, I think it's like one hour a week, you know, what is it? You know, you sort of take it for granted. But, you know, she's like, "How long can you stay today?" and, "When are you coming again?" So I mean, so I've just tried to be, you know, persistent – going every week... (10)

In the above quotes both Feroza and Naefa cite their mentees' expression of their desire to see them as a motivating factor in their consistently making the time to spend with them. This contrasts directly with Lara's and the experience of some of the other mentors in relationships narrated in the unidirectional terms of the narrative of 'help'.

Lara:

L: I think me being a Big Sister does mean a lot to her, but she doesn't show it at all. But, so I'm, I'm just assuming that it is. Because she's always there every week...But, ja, she doesn't say anything...Um, I suppose what I was expecting was for Meagan always to be excited whenever she saw me, and to, you know, love the things that I would do with her, and, like, even if everything else was a mess in her life, she would

always be happy when she was with me. But I can see that, um, even though it's not always, like, rosy, I'm sure I'm helping her in some way... (11)

Lara's comment on her unmet expectations, that "Even though it's not always, like, rosy, I'm sure I'm helping her in some way," implies that she perceives Meagan's expression of appreciation of the relationship as evidence that she is helping her, her conviction being diminished by the lack of this evidence. She further cites her feeling that she is not helping Meagan as a primary reason for her decision to terminate the relationship once the year is up (section 3.1.1, quote 1). It thus seems that Meagan's failure to communicate enjoyment of the relationship is directly connected with this decision. This finding is again supported by previous research. For instance, Morrow and Styles (1995) found that the primary sources of mentors' frustrations were their mentees' failure to provide reassurance and feedback on the relationships' meaning, as well as their own inability to adjust preconceived expectations of the relationship's ability to engender change.

Naefa, in her account of her relationship with Micaela, makes explicit the importance of reciprocity, identified by Liang et al. (2002) and Phillip and Hendry (2000; 1996), for the success of these relationships. She constructs both partners as equal, if different, agents and Micaela's actions as equally valuable as her own:

N: And I don't feel as if it's a one-way relationship, like I'm just giving, and, you know, it's, she's you know, reciprocating as well on her own time, at her own pace. Even though it's not the same way that I am, it's still in her way. And that, for me, is meaningful. (12)

3.2.3. Summary

The unidirectionality of the narrative of 'help' appears, when the dominant narrative in terms of which the relationship is recounted, to inhibit the agency of the mentees, relegating them to passive positions and limiting their potential for action. The construction of the relationships as such therefore appears to have significant effects for the interactions that occur between the partners. Amongst other undesirable

relationship elements, poor communication, misunderstanding and inability to ask for assistance are prevalent in the accounts of these relationships.

In the accounts of those relationships in which a narrative of 'friendship for its own sake' is predominant, this discrepancy of agency is not present, nor the corresponding negative features of the former relationships. Rather, these relationships seem to be characterised by good communication and ability on the part of the mentees to ask for assistance and to direct that offered. These mentees are able to author their contributions to the relationships, communicating effectively, naming their own experience, and so on. The ability of the mentees in these relationships to express themselves freely, and so express their appreciation of their relationships, further appears to act as a source of reward and encouragement to the mentors concerned. As has been shown, this is in direct contrast to the lack of communication on the part of mentees who narrate their relationships in terms of the narrative of 'help'.

3.3. Social distance

Social difference and the construction thereof plays a major part in the accounts of these relationships. This may be seen as a result of the huge socio-economic discrepancies between the mentors and mentees in this study. As previously mentioned, all mentors are relatively well off, and all mentees poor, as indicated by programme records, according to which their parents are either unemployed or earn less than twenty-five thousand rand per year. Those relationships recounted in terms of the narrative of 'help' can again be distinguished from those recounted in terms of a narrative of 'friendship for its own sake' in terms of the participants' constructions and modes of responding to these differences.

3.3.1. Social distance in the narrative of 'help'

All five of the mentors and mentees in the relationships recounted primarily in terms of the narrative of 'help' constructed themselves and each other as belonging to distinct and opposite groups. This narrative, with its opposing subject positions, can be seen as making available these constructions of self and other. The distance created between individual mentors and mentees through these definitions appears in these accounts to be further exaggerated by similar constructions based on socio-economic differences, and rooted in historical narratives of the dominance of some groups over others. This distance, as will be shown, appears to have considerable import for the interactions between the relationship partners.

Mentors and mentees as opposing groups

The construction of mentors and mentees as distinct and opposing groups in the accounts of these relationships is evident in the following quotes.

Vera:

And um, ja, coming from different worlds ...she doesn't say thank you. Which in the beginning used to bother me. But obviously they, they haven't been taught to say thank

you for things. D'you know what I mean? So- I mean the first time we took them out, it was me and Daneel. And we took out Berenice and Marlein...And we dropped them off and they just got out the car, and Daneel and I looked at each other, and we thought, "Now didn't they enjoy themselves? Or did we do something wrong?" You know? (1)

Lara:

Um, well last week when I went to visit her, it was me, Layla and Daneel, we're the three Bigs. And, um, Meagan, Veronique and Marlein are the three Littles. And I brought a board game, Trivial Pursuit...And Daneel and Layla and I, we were trying to get them to talk, and we were trying to play the game, and like, "D'you wanna play the game?" They like, "No!" (2)

Meagan describes her response to Lara when there is conflict between them, as above:

I: So what do you do? Like if she comes and you're cross?...

M: Sometimes I go with Veronique, then ignore them.

I: And then you just ignore them, the Big Sisters?

M: (Nods, laughs) (3)

In the above quotes, as throughout these accounts, individual relationship partners speak of themselves and each other in terms of the groups, namely mentors or mentees, to which they belong. In all three extracts, the participants refer interchangeably to individuals and groups, and attribute joint responsibility to group members for the actions described. Vera begins by referring to Berenice's failure to say thank you and then immediately shifts to use of the pronoun 'they' in her explanation of this behaviour – "She doesn't say thank you...But obviously they, they haven't been taught to say thank you for things." Lara explicitly refers to herself and the other two mentors in her story as a group, as she does their respective mentees, – "It was me, Layla and Daneel, we're the three Bigs. And, um, Meagan, Veronique and Marlein are the three Littles." The same pattern is evident in the extract from her mentee, Meagan's, account. In response to my question inquiring specifically about her relationship with Lara, she refers to the mentors as a group, and positions herself in alignment with Veronique, one of the other mentees – "Sometimes I go with Veronique, then ignore them." This interchangeable reference to the individual and the group seems particularly significant in that it is only in the extract from Lara's account that it is explicitly stated that she is referring to the members of more than one relationship. The other two quotes begin by referring to particular individuals, who are subsequently indexed with plural pronouns, indicating a taken for granted construction of these individuals in terms of the groups to which they belong.

Group members in these extracts are further attributed with joint responsibility for the actions described. Vera relates the story of an event, within which she positions herself and the other mentor, Daneel, as jointly responsible not only for taking their mentees out, but also for their thoughts about their failure to say thank you. Similar constructions are evident in Lara's account, in which both the mentors and their respective mentees are depicted as acting in unison – "We were trying to play the game, and like, 'D'you wanna play the game?' They, like, 'No!'" This interchangeability of individual and group references and attribution of collective responsibility for actions occurs only within and not across the mentor – mentee group boundaries, and exists in contrast to an absence of similar modes of description pairing relationship partners with each other.

The three relationships discussed in the extracts from Lara's and Meagan's accounts appear furthermore to be physically conducted largely in terms of these groups. According to their own accounts, while the individual pairs do spend some time in one-to-one interaction, a considerable amount of their time together is spent in group activities. Those one-to-one interactions that do take place are frequently engaged in by all three pairs simultaneously in a single classroom. The extract from Meagan's account sheds further light on the distancing that occurs between the mentors and mentees during these sessions. Apparently referring to the same lack of co-operation described in the extract from Lara's account, Meagan describes how she and Veronique pair up and ignore their mentors. This behaviour can be seen as a consequence and furtherance of these opposing group-based definitions, the distance created thereby between individual mentors and mentees brought further into being by the physical enactment of their relationships in these terms.

Socio-economic differences and exaggerated distance

The distance created between mentors and mentees when constructed as distinct groups in terms of their positions as such appears to be exaggerated by constructions of self, other and the relationship's purpose in terms of the socio-economic differences that exist between them. Constructions of mentors and mentees are inextricably connected to those of their respective socio-economic groupings. This is

evident in the extract from Kay's account (section 3.1.1, quote 2), in which she describes her misgivings about the value of her relationship with Janet due to the fact that at the end of it Janet "goes back to where she came from". It is further illustrated by the following quotes.

Layla:

L: I thought...the influences of the relationship would affect her morals and her values. Um, compared to the environment which she's in... the community in which they live is quite, you can't say that any of them, they don't grow up with any morals and ethics...for instance bullying at school. OK, that would be one, OK, that's one instance. They wouldn't walk away from the situation and face the fear, they would just act upon their instincts. Someone's hurt me, I need to hurt them back. They don't have any guidance, they don't know what is the best thing for their future. They just go about and do what they want. (4)

Lara:

I: I mean there's an idea that the mentors should come out of the same community as the children.
R: I'm not sure about the same community. Because I'm not sure how that would help. Um, because, ja, a lot of the older girls, they're very, ja, you can see they were just like Meagan when they were her age. (5)

In these extracts differences between the mentors' and mentees' socio-economic circumstances are paramount, both in terms of defining the individuals discussed and in terms of their relationships' purpose. Mentors and mentees are constructed as belonging to distinct and homogeneous socio-economic groups, as indicated by the binary constructions of themselves and each other in these terms. Layla, for instance, refers continually to Veronique's community as 'they' and 'them'. She thereby excludes herself from attributes she ascribes to them and depicts the community as a coherent group, homogeneous in their values and modes of behaviour – "They wouldn't walk away from the situation and face the fear, they would just act upon their instincts. Someone's hurt me, I need to hurt them back." A similar dichotomy is created in Kay's account by means of the juxtaposition of 'this do-gooder white' with 'some poor disadvantaged coloured girl', and of 'going back' with 'coming here' and the 'beliefs and attitudes' associated with 'here' and 'there'. Lara explicitly states of the 'older girls' in Meagan's community that, "You can see they were just like Meagan when they were her age," again implying homogeneity of the social group.

These binary constructions of self and other in terms of socio-economic groupings can be seen as related to those in terms of the subject positions of mentor and mentee. The relationship between these definitions can be understood not only in terms of the reality of their social differences, but also in terms of the mentors' constructions of their respective social groups as distinct from each other in terms of the very 'morals and ethics', 'beliefs and attitudes' and modes of behaviour they hope to influence. It appears thus that the mentees' need for a mentoring relationship is directly related in these accounts to negative constructions of their identities in terms of their socio-economic group. The mentors' ability to help them is likewise related to similar positive ones. The role these constructions play in exaggerating the distance between mentors and mentees in individual relationships will be elaborated in the following section.

Social distance, communication and empathy

The distance created between the relationship partners as above can be seen as presenting a barrier to friendship, as is expressed in Kay's account:

There are difficulties, ja. Well, the first thing, that we come from such different backgrounds. And, oh, there's so many differences between us. I'm white, she's coloured. I'm forty-four, she's sixteen. I've got lots of money...she's very poor. I come from a good background, I've had a good education, I've grown up in a really nice place. She hasn't. Her parents live under a bridge. She lives in Maitland Village. You know, she's, she is disadvantaged. I'm English speaking. She's Afrikaans speaking... The only thing that's similar between us is our genders, for goodness sake. And I, sometimes I feel this isn't right. You know, we, I don't know, I feel I'm intruding on her world, I shouldn't be there, I sometimes feel that, I don't know, I feel uncomfortable – does she resent me? ...I definitely do feel those things. Even once I went to fetch her and her friend. To take them to Fish Hoek beach. And a man came up to the car – he just wanted to talk to me – and he said to me, "Oh, have you come to pick up Janet to take her to work, are you her new employer?" And I said, "No! I'm her friend!" And I thought to myself, "But he summed up the situation well." I mean from his point of view, how could I possibly be a friend? I've come along in my fancy car, into Maitland Village...and what other reason would I be there for, except to pick up somebody who's going to clean my house? (6)

The extracts that follow give further insight into the effects of these binary constructions on the interactions that occur between relationship partners.

Meagan:

I: And if something's like worrying you? Do you tell Lara?

M: (Shakes head)... No, because she gonna tell Daneel at home... Because she's like, like, um, like going home. Then she going to talk to her what we doing.

I: OK. So you couldn't tell her like stuff that you don't want other people to know.

OK. Ja. So what kind of stuff d'you feel like you can't tell her?

R: Like anything, man. I don't want to tell her. Net something if we go to someone, or if we go on holidays. Then I tell her. I don't want to tell her bad things. (7)

Here Meagan cites Lara's communication with one of the other mentors about "what we doing" as the reason she is unable to "tell her bad things." It appears that the association of Lara with the other mentors may create in Meagan's perception a greater likelihood that she will break her confidences than might be the case in a more one-to-one relationship. Meagan's suspicion, in this context, can further be understood with reference to the focus in the narrative of 'help' on the outcomes of these relationships, as measurable by observable changes in the mentees' behaviour. This may be seen as engendering conversation amongst the mentors about their mentees and how to effect these changes. That these conversations do in fact occur is suggested by the joint actions taken by some of the mentors to remedy their mentees' behaviour. For example Lara, Daneel and Layla describe how, after becoming aware of aggression amongst the girls in the school, the three mentors showed their mentees an educational video about bullying. They further showed, in my interviews with them, a detailed knowledge of each other's relationships, including their mentees' behaviour.

From this example it is possible to speculate on how construction of these relationships in terms of the narrative of 'help' may pose an obstacle to the success of simply enacting the 'developmental' practices defined by Morrow and Styles (1995). While they identify, for instance, not pressing mentees to discuss personal issues as one of the practices likely to result in spontaneous disclosure, such practices may have little impact when mentees perceive their acts of self-revelation as exposing them to the mentors as a group.

The following quotes reveal how mutual understanding in the communication that does take place between these mentors and mentees may be jeopardised by the social distance between them.

Lara:

Also, I didn't, I obviously knew there was going to be differences between both our social contexts, and things, but I, I've never done anything like this before, so I don't think I expected there to be so many differences... It's amazing how many people are in the village during the day, just- The parents just walking around, talking to each other, doing nothing, mothers walking around clearly drunk, clearly drunk. And, ja, it's incredible, half the kids live with their aunts, or their grandparents, and it's just, it's insane that she's been around that. So I don't know how much, I mean obviously that's affected her, but I don't know how much it has.

I: D'you find those kind of social differences pose a difficulty in the relationship?

L: One thing that has come up is violence. Because I know that both her brothers are gangsters. And, um what came up recently was, um, she was saying how one of her brothers got in a fight and he stabbed this other person because they had said something about their mother, or, or Meagan. And Meagan went running to her brother, and her brother came back and stabbed the guy. And I was like, "Well what would you do in that situation?" She was like, "No, I'd do the same."... And there was no, "Ja, my mom got very angry with him," or anything. It like stopped. The minute he stabbed the guy that was the end of the story, because he had sorted out the problem... And what we did a few weeks ago... we took them up to UCT, and we showed them a video on gang violence, and violence at the schools... And they would just laugh, but they would be laughing at the people, saying, "Oh, look what he's wearing!" kind of thing. Which was, it was scary, I mean I was thinking I was shocked by the video, and they were sitting there going, "Oh, this is just a boring video." (8)

Vera:

R... We haven't actually discussed it (Berenice's sexual assault) much.

I: OK, so it hasn't really been an issue in the relationship?

R: I'm just wondering if, ja, the way some of the girls talk at the school, you know, um, if some of them are maybe having sex already. I mean if you think about it, they are like twelve – eleven, twelve, thirteen, which I mean obviously is very young. But if you just hear some of them saying, um, ja, "And then this boy," and, you know, and they were all smoking, and- I would never even dream of smoking when I was that age. But, if you think about it, maybe it is going on and we just don't know about it. (9)

These mentors construct the experience of their respective mentees as antithetical to their own, hindering the potential for empathetic understanding. Lara's description of what she perceives to be Meagan's experience emphasises its difference from her own or that which might be hers. She focuses in this description on the absence of anything that she would expect. For instance, with reference to the stabbing she says, "And there was no, 'Ja, my mom got very angry with him,' or anything." A diametric contrast is created through the comparison she draws between her reaction to the video on violence and that of the mentees – "They would be laughing at the people ... Which was scary, I mean I was thinking I was shocked by the video." She further constructs Meagan's reaction as incomprehensible to her, describing it as 'scary' or

relating it in such a way that it appears absurd – “The minute he stabbed the guy that was the end of the story because he had sorted out the problem.” The impossibility of empathetic understanding between them appears to be rooted in Lara’s location of their differing experience in their equally different socio-economic contexts. Within this discussion Meagan’s social environment is similarly described as beyond comprehension – “And, ja, it’s incredible, half the kids live with their aunts, or their grandparents, and it’s just, it’s insane that she’s been around that.”

Vera similarly constructs Berenice’s experience as different from her own. This can be seen when Vera’s reflections are considered in their context as a response to my question whether Berenice’s sexual assault had perhaps not been an issue in their relationship. From this perspective, her statement that “the way some of the girls talk at school...some of them are maybe having sex already” implies that, as one of these girls, Berenice’s experience of the assault may have been less of an issue than it might have, had this not been the case. Vera’s statement that, “they were all smoking and I would never even dream of smoking when I was that age,” again alludes to the differences between ‘them’ and her in this sense. The fact that Vera’s implication that the experience of a sexual assault is less traumatic for girls who are ‘having sex already’ is arguably untrue further suggests that her interpretation of Berenice’s experience probably indicates a lack of empathy, rather than an insight.

Constructions of need and receptivity of the mentees

The purpose of those mentors who construct themselves and their mentees in relation to the ‘morals and ethics’, ‘beliefs and attitudes’ and behaviours attributed to their respective social groups to improve these in their mentees is evident in the accounts of their mentees also. For instance, Adam (section 3.2.1, quote 6) refers to Feroza’s questions about his knowledge of the consequences of alcohol and drugs and his standpoint on gangsterism and violence. Meagan, as above, alludes to Lara’s likely discussions of hers and the other mentees’ negative behaviour. Both Adam and Meagan attempt to resist the form of help offered in these extracts. Meagan avoids talking to Lara about the ‘bad things’ that might provoke her supposed conversations with the other mentors, and Adam attempts to block Feroza’s questions – “Yes, but I don’t *like* it.” The following quote refers also to the kinds of moral and behavioural

changes discussed, in which Adam explicitly states his reaction to the 'help' offered by Feroza in this regard:

I: And when Feroza was your Big Sister did she feel to you to be more like a friend, or more like a mother, or more like a teacher, or what kind of...?

A: More like a mother.

I: Is it? More like a mother? Like what about her felt like a mother?

A: Always tell me, um stuff...Like, "Do you do stuff in the house? Do you-"

I: So tell me about one of the times when Feroza was telling you about the house, and what you should do in the house and what you shouldn't do, and stuff like that. Like what would she say, and what would you say, and all that?

A: I will say, "No, I wouldn't swear, and I wouldn't-". Or, "Ja, I will wash up for my mother," or, "Ja, I will do that," and...Some make me a little bit angry and stuff...Some stuff. Not like angry, angry, but just mad like-

I: Like what, what would she say?

A: I must help my mother to make up the bed, and, and I must- It make me angry. (10)

Thus it appears that this 'help', responsive to a perceived need for moral and behavioural change, and related to negative and stereotypical constructions of the mentees and the social group with whom they are identified, is resisted by the mentees. As will be shown, this resistance is in contrast with the reaction of those mentees in relationships narrated as friendships for their own sake, to the form of help offered by their mentors.

Race and constructions of difference

It might be reasonably assumed that racial differences between mentors and mentees, in a segregated society such as that of South Africa, would be a focal point of constructions of difference in the accounts of these relationships. However, as evident above, it was other socio-economic differences, such as economic and cultural ones, that presented themselves as the primary points of interest in this study. While this might indicate that these are of greater importance in the construction of these relationships, as indicated by Rhodes (2002b) it should be remembered in the interpretation of this discussion that the small sample may have obscured the emergence of patterns in this regard. The absence of the contribution of race to these constructions may further be accounted for by such factors as the white mentors' education in the social sciences. This education may have increased their awareness of the issues in this regard, and reduced the likelihood that they would explicitly posit

race as a factor accounting for their differences, resulting in a tendency to overtly ascribe these differences to environmental factors.

3.3.2. Social distance and narratives of 'friendship for its own sake'

References to the social differences between mentors and mentees are present in the accounts of all the relationships in this study. However, those relationships recounted primarily in terms of a narrative of 'friendship for its own sake' appear not to be limited by these differences, and to have established patterns of communication and mutual understanding that go beyond the construction of self, other and the relationship in these binary terms.

Cultural similarity as an asset

Since one of the relationships in this category was between a mentor and mentee from somewhat similar social backgrounds, the effect of the similarities on their relationship deserves a certain amount of attention. While from different echelons in terms of class, this pair shared the characteristics of race, religion and, to a large extent, culture. As Daneel, the mentor in this relationship, put it,

I am part of them in a way. I'm their colour. I know their language. I understand the culture...And, I mean, you've got to come down to their level, man. You've got to understand what they thinking, what they feeling. So, doing that you can get into that...And I mean I've grown up there. I haven't grown up in the same circumstances, but I've been with kids, and I mean as a child I've played with other children, and um, I can understand. Even though my values are, my parents, um, moulded me with certain values and stuff, I can understand how it's different because I've been in lots of houses where things weren't as privileged...So I understand what it's like for people to be poor and to not have this and that, and how parents, um, speak to their children, and how it makes the children feel and how it makes them react. So that's why I can understand, relate. (1)

This extract is in direct contrast to that from Lara's account, in which she constructs herself as unable to understand Meagan's experience. While Daneel clearly refers to the mentees as a cohesive group, making generalised statements about 'them' throughout the extract, this group is not constructed as either impenetrable or opposed to herself or her own group. Instead, she describes herself as "part of them in a way," basing this unity on shared race, language and culture. She explicitly cites these

similarities as enabling her to empathise with “what they thinking, what they feeling.” Although her economic circumstances are different from those of the mentees she does not construct this difference in binary terms but rather in terms of degree – “I haven’t grown up in the same circumstances but ...I’ve been in lots of houses where things weren’t as privileged.” The different classes are thus neither opposed nor impenetrable to members of the other. While to Lara and Layla, above, the mentees’ experience is incomprehensible and even absurd, Daneel is able to imagine “what it’s like for people to be poor...and how it makes them feel, and how it makes them react.” Thus exposure to similar circumstances can be seen, in this instance, as an aid to empathetic understanding.

Daneel continues by relating the story of an event in which shared cultural knowledge enabled her to “think how they thinking”:

So because I speak Afrikaans and I understand what they *mean*, when they say, like, certain slangs, and- And, I mean, if you can speak their language, if you understand them, then you can, like a link, you know...you can sense that common ground. So, um, like once we sat outside and we were just talking, they were talking about going dancing, going to dances at school...So, I said to them, “O, gaan julle dans toe?”...So she’s telling me how Veronique dresses. Veronique dresses, “Stywe jeans, and Levis ook,” I said, “O, jy’s mos ryk, ne!” So then her friend said, “And Marlein ook!”... So, um just being able to understand Afrikaans helped them feel more comfortable...It’s almost, like, subtle...Because if you don’t know the lingo, then you won’t be able to get that important information...Think how they thinking, how they feel at that moment. What dancing is associated with...Um, wat’s ‘donker broekies’ associated with, what’s ‘stywe jeans’ associated with. You know, all those things have significance, they’re very symbolic. If you don’t understand that, you won’t, ja. (2)

In this extract Daneel seems to refer to understanding that goes beyond the literal meaning of words and extends to cultural associations between concepts. She explicitly states that an understanding of the lingo is essential to a grasp of the connections between words and their associations, the implication being that there are certain things, such as ‘donker broekies’, that can only be understood in the context of an insider’s knowledge of the culture.

This relationship provides insight into the kinds of empathetic understanding achievable through shared cultural experience. Neither the kind of understanding nor the social similarities evident in the account of this relationship, however, should be seen as essential for friendship. As discussed, references to social difference are

present in the accounts of all the relationships in this study. In the accounts of those relationships in which narratives of 'friendship for its own sake' are predominant, however, these do not appear as insurmountable barriers to friendship, as is apparent in the following extracts:

Naefa:

Well at first it was a bit hard... because you are the Big, sort of adult in the, in the relationship, so it's hard to get the person to interact with you on an equal basis, and that's what you actually want, you want an equal partnership, you want an equal friendship, relationship. And also, in terms of other things like socio-economic circumstances, you know, the Littles sort of look up to you like that, and they have certain expectations of you. (3)

And:

I: Does that difference, cultural, religious difference, come into the relationship?
 N: I don't think that it's like a conscious element, something that you consciously have to be aware of. When it does come up, then, you know, I'll ask, I'll explain things to her and if she doesn't understand she'll ask me. And I'll ask her, "What do you normally do on Christmas day, how d'you normally spend your Christmas? What do you do when you wake up on Christmas day, d'you go out?" You know, I'll ask her about Easter and stuff like that. And I've taken her a Christmas gift and marshmallow eggs and stuff like that. Ja, we've sort of shared information about religion and culture... I wouldn't say that it's a hindrance or an obstacle or anything like that – it's inevitable. You know, dealing with someone who's different from you. And also your religion and your culture is so much a part of who you are. So by getting to know her it's obvious that I would like to get to know more about her culture, and religion. And it just makes me understand more. (4)

Difference is thus constructed in these relationships as an obstacle to be overcome and even an incentive for the partners to explore each other's realities, providing evidence that, while perhaps useful in Daneel's relationship with Marlein, social similarity should not be seen as a requirement for mutual understanding.

Personal sub-narratives and the focus on similarity

While difference is evident in these accounts, therefore, the more personal sub-narratives that make up the accounts of these relationships demonstrate a focus on similarity. For instance, a major focus of the interactions between Feroza and Melanie is their common enjoyment of Michael Jackson, as evident in Melanie's account

(section 3.1.1, quote 8) and in the extract from Feroza's below. Similarly, Naefa and Micaela have a focus on shared elements of their family life, such as their brothers.

Naefa:

And, um Micaela has a younger brother, and I also, have younger brothers. So we'll often share anecdotes. She'll say, you know, "My brother was fighting with me, and he likes to tease me," and stuff like that. So I will, you know, tell her about my brothers, and you know, "You know, brothers are like that," and- So we'll sort of, that's something that we have in common that we can both talk about. (5)

Micaela:

I: And is there anything you really like talking to Naefa about?

M: How the day was and stuff, and if we wanna go out, and how Griffin (her brother) is, and stuff. (6)

And:

I: What's the best thing about having Naefa around?

M: She always keep me happy. I'm never sad when I'm with her.

I: Is it? How does she keep you happy?

M: She always talks stuff I, I like

I: Like what?

M: About um, her family at home, and stuff... Her brothers is never naughty, just sometimes. Um, her mother want me to come visit again and stuff. (7)

Feroza:

And we've got one commonality, she likes Michael Jackson, and I love Michael Jackson, so we've got like a *huge* thing going there. Every week we will talk, "Did you listen to this song, did you listen to that song, I must still show you this picture, I must bring you this book, Oh, Auntie This has this video-tape, When we going to watch it?" and that sort of thing. And whenever we go to the CD shop then I have to get her the CD of Michael Jackson and she has to listen to that song. (Laughs) *Always*. We spend a whole hour there and the man keeps telling me, "Only ten minutes to listen", "OK, yes, that's five minutes". (Laughs) (8)

It appears that the range of these more personal narratives allows much greater scope for common elements between the partners. They further take the emphasis off the groups in terms of which the partners can be classified, and place it rather on features unique to the individuals. The presence of the other mentors and mentees is not evident in these narratives, as it is in the narratives of 'help', and references other than to the single individuals are to the pair as a unit, rather than to the groups of mentors or mentees.

It further appears in the accounts of these relationships that even when formally acting the part of the mentor, for instance in giving advice or helping the mentee in some other sense, these mentors maintain their focus on similarity. This is illustrated in the following extracts:

Daneel:

I don't want her to think that that I'm all wonderful, because I'm just an ordinary person and I have difficulties just like her, just in different forms... I think she needs encouragement because... I sense that she undermines herself. So I just want to show her, like, I also have a tendency of doing that, so I can relate to that. (9)

And:

But, um, you know, yesterday she was very quiet and shy, and excited at the same time because I asked her why she wanted a Big and she said, no, she wanted a Big Sister because she is the big sister. And she doesn't have someone to talk to and someone to share things with. So she wanted someone to be her big, her big sister. (10)

Naefa:

I think I've tried to sort of set an example, by giving her a model of behaviour, you know sharing my own experiences, and then thinking that maybe she could not necessarily copy, or imitate mine, but that she could, you know, that um, that she can, it's sort of a model that she can use when she draws up her own goals. Because I mean being a mentor is about being a positive role model, and it's a sort of a two-way relationship, you have to give and impart information and share. And the only way you can really do that well is if you talk about your own experiences, and how things were for you... I will tell her what it was like for me when I was at school, and- She's been through, she's said that she doesn't have any real friends at school. Um, the kids are nasty, they tease her, and when she approaches them they sort of go away... So I've told her that, um, even when I was in primary school kids were very nasty, and they tease you, and they say things to hurt you... So by that, ja, I've spoken about my own school experiences. (11)

In these extracts Daneel and Naefa refer specifically to their roles as mentors rather than merely as friends, and actively attempt to help their respective mentees. The approach they assume, however, is in direct contrast to the focus on difference in terms of which the mentees' need and the mentors' ability to provide help is constructed in accounts of relationships in which the narrative of 'help' predominates. In all three extracts these mentors define their ability to help their mentees in terms of similarities between them, due to common experience or similar positions, for instance as big sisters. This ability to incorporate knowledge gained from their own similar experiences can be seen as enhancing their potential for empathetic

understanding of their mentees' difficulties – in Daneel's words, "I can relate." It further illustrates Rhodes, Bogat, et al. (2002) and Styles and Morrow's (1996) finding that those mentors most successful in establishing empathy with their mentees were able to do so by recalling their own similar experiences or feelings. Mentors' sharing their own experiences with their mentees can further be seen as providing a potential resource on which the mentees can draw in navigating their own lives.

Constructions of need

The following quotes illustrate a further contrast between the accounts of those relationships dominated by a narrative of 'help' and those recounted in terms of a narrative of 'friendship for its own sake'. This contrast is in terms of the mentors' perceptions of the nature of their mentees' need for the relationship.

Naefa:

I think one of the main things about establishing a relationship with your mentee is just being there, going to see her every week for one hour, just being consistent. Because especially in my mentee's life, like she, I don't think she's had anything, you know, consistent in her life. Someone that she can depend on. She's, she doesn't, she's got an absent father...So she, for her, she hasn't had really anything or someone that she can really depend on. (12)

Daneel:

Coz I don't think they have that quality communication time. Their, I mean, circumstances are a bit hectic. So, um, she probably just lacks that and, um friends also maybe just don't give her her space, or they've got a lot of expectations. (13)

And:

I feel that she definitely needs someone just for herself. She doesn't have anybody for herself. Because she's, everything's crowded, like I told her she could do the, finish the crafts at home. And she can't because she doesn't have her own room. She said, no, her uncles, or brothers, I don't know, are gonna destroy the stuff. So I feel that she's got me for that hour, and I've got her for that hour, and it's our space...I'm there for her to give her her own space. So, it's something that she has ownership for herself...So I'm adding that dimension. Also, I'm her sister, man, like her Big. Someone that she can kind of depend on. (14)

Feroza:

The main thing is that her mother has like a little child, and...the grandmother's staying there. Her mother doesn't really have time for her, and that's like her main thing. So when I'm with her I just try to concentrate on her, let the focus be on her. Just, ja, that's the thing. (15)

These accounts particularise (Billig, 1996) the mentees' needs for the mentoring relationships, relating them to specific aspects of their unique circumstances. This can be contrasted with the more generalised constructions of need in terms of stereotypical notions about the mentees' social group in those accounts dominated by the narrative of 'help'. In the accounts of those relationships in which a narrative of 'friendship for its own sake' predominates, the mentees' needs are rather perceived in terms of their individual circumstances and with reference to particular aspects of these, unrelated to constructions of identity. These mentors refer instead to specific and purely circumstantial factors, for instance an absent father, the lack of a consistently dependable figure, the lack of 'quality communication time', a busy mother and so on. This reference to specific needs does not have the effect of creating the distance between mentors and mentees referred to above, but rather leaves room for similarities between them with reference to other aspects of their lives, unlike constructions of generalised need, which appear to suppress the possibility for these.

Constructions of need and receptivity to help

Mentors' references to particular needs can be seen as paralleled in the mentees' accounts of these relationships, as illustrated in the following extracts:

Micaela:

I: And so what kinds of things that worry you can you tell Naefa about?

M: Just if, if, if someone hits me. And um, if they're rude. I tell her.

I: So, um, when was the last time you told Naefa about one of those things?

M: When they kicked me...She, um, she came back that day. And so they kicked me. I, I bended to, to um to pick up the paper. And so they kicked me

I: And what did Naefa say?

M: I must stay away from that boy...

I: And did she help you to feel better?

M: (Nods)

I: Is it? How did she, how did she help you to feel better?

M: "Don't cry," um, "I'm going to 'phone teacher Mitchell" and stuff.

I: OK, ja. And did she then? Did she 'phone Mrs Mitchell?

M: (Nods)

I: And did you like that?

M: (Nods) (16)

Melanie:

I: What's the best thing you ever did with Feroza?

M: Talk to her.

I: Is it? Talking? And what's the best thing you ever talked to her about?

M: About my school...My schoolwork and, my schoolwork, and "How's it with my school?" and "Who's bullying me?" And if I'm fine by my schoolwork.

I: And why is that the best thing that you talk to her about?

M: Coz if someone bullies me she's gonna come to my teacher. (17)

And:

I: And when she helps you with your schoolwork? Can you remember the last time she helped you with your schoolwork?

R: A month ago, uh, when (inaudible) gave us work, so I wrote it over so she could help me do my work, ja. She helped me with the answers. She helped me to count *big* numbers.

I: And did you ask her to help you?

R: Ja (18)

The reference to particular events with regard to which these mentors help their mentees can be seen as related to the mentors' similar constructions of their mentees' specific needs, as discussed above. Both refer to particular situations in the mentees' environments, in this instance school bullying and difficulties with homework, which create a need for the mentors' help and are unconnected to stigmatising constructions of identity. The mentees' reactions to the help they receive in these accounts can be seen as opposite to that of the mentees discussed above, who attempt to avoid the help offered by their mentors. For instance, Meagan is disinclined to tell Lara 'bad things' and Adam attempts to block Feroza's questions about his knowledge and standpoint on such matters as gangsterism and drugs. It thus appears that offers of help, when related to constructions of the mentors' and mentees' identities and to their attributes, such as values or behaviours, are resisted by the mentees in this study. Help related to specific hazards in the mentees' environments, however, and embedded in a sub-narrative of the relationship, rather than constructed as the purpose of the relationship in its entirety, is gratefully taken up and even actively sought out by the mentees concerned.

Balancing inequality

While the above sections discuss the ways in which social distance between the relationship partners is exaggerated or minimised through constructions of difference,

there is an extent to which the differences between them have to be recognised as a reality. This section will therefore look at the ways in which social difference can be handled in order that the negative effects it may have on the relationships be minimised. To this end, the discussion will focus on the strategies employed by Naefa. This mentor not only constructs her relationship and the pair in ways that minimise distance, but has further developed ways of dealing with their differences to the extent to which they are inevitable. The following quotes illustrate some of the practical strategies she employs in this regard:

You don't want it to be a materialistic relationship, you don't want her to look up to you as someone who's gonna take her out, someone who's going to give you sweets...And, well, when I go and see her at the school and we stay at the school, um then, you know, we'll like interact, but when I take her to my house, or I take her out then I do buy her things, or buy her lunch. And when she comes to my house I treat her like I would any other visitor, you know? You know, giving her sweets, and whatever, like that. So when she comes to my house or I take her out then it's sort of different from when I go to her school. When I go to her school I won't take her lunch or anything like that. (19)

So, and early in the match, there was one exercise, I told you that she didn't want to ask me things, you know? So, um, I thought maybe we could write one another letters, and then she could, you know, tell me in that way what she likes about me, or what we could do differently, or stuff like that. So, um, we exchanged letters, and I told her that I'm glad she's my little sister, I hope that we can be friends, and stuff like that. But her letter was a bit more informal. She was, she just asked me how my weekend was, can we go out, and- But I've explained to her that if she doesn't want to say anything personal, she can just write about whatever she wants. So she did that, so- It's fine, I didn't want to push her or anything, I just thought that, you know, sometimes people can't actually say what they want to say, they can communicate better by writing. (20)

In the first quote, Naefa's decision not to give Micaela material things in situations other than those in which she would give to 'any other visitor' can be seen reducing the impact of the concrete and structural inequalities between them. She avoids a situation in which her acts of giving would be directly associated with the differences in their socio-economic statuses, such as bringing her lunch when she visits her at school, which would increase the distance between them in this regard. Instead she shifts the attention onto the non-material aspects of the friendship, in terms of which an equal relationship is more possible. In the second quote, she acknowledges the reality of the differential power between them. Her suggestion that they write each other letters in order to encourage Micaela to communicate with her more effectively

can be seen as offering Micaela a tool by which to extend her power within the relationship and thus compensate to some extent for her relative lack thereof.

The following extracts illustrate some further strategies Naefa employs, this time involving use of the imagination:

And even though they are at school she likes playing classroom games. Then I have to be the teacher, and I don't want to be the teacher, because it's just, that sort of just accentuates the role, the power role. So I'd rather be a difficult student (inaudible)...And also because by her being the teacher, I want her to sort of get a feel like what the teacher goes through when she's in the situation that she has a rowdy class to contend with. (21)

Ja, um, I've encouraged her, you know, to do her homework, and- Ja. We have, I've spoken about it. You know, things that I wanted to do when I was younger, or, you know? Like silly things, like maybe being a fireman, or stuff like that. You know, I've encouraged her and told her, "Even though you think it's silly, it's OK, everybody has those ideals. You know, I sort of use her imagination, and- (22)

Naefa's tactics in these extracts can be seen as balancing hers and Micaela's differences by inverting, in their imaginations, the subject positions they occupy. In the first quote, Naefa assumes the position of 'a difficult student' and Micaela her teacher and in the second, Naefa evokes the image of herself as a child. The usefulness of this tactic can be seen in terms of Hermans et al's (1993) argument for the importance of the imaginary in social existence and their criticism of the superordinate importance placed on the 'real'. Through use of the imagination, Naefa extends the range of subject positions available to herself and Micaela, such that they are no longer confined to the assumption of opposite positions. In both these extracts this strategy allows Naefa to teach Micaela with regard to such matters as her attitude at school and the importance of future goals, both highly relevant in terms of the programme's objectives. She is able to do this, however, without attempting to direct Micaela's thoughts or behaviour. Rather, she makes certain experiences available to Micaela, for instance her own desires as a child to be "silly things, like maybe...a fireman," and the possible experience of a teacher "that...has a rowdy class to contend with." Micaela is thus left to author her own thoughts and behaviour with regard to these experiences.

3.2.2. Summary

Analysis of the accounts of the relationships in this study suggests that constructions of self and other in opposite terms may have detrimental effects on the interactions between mentors and mentees. Constructions of the differences between mentors and mentees in terms of these positions are further heavily bound up with constructions of socio-economic grouping, exaggerating the distance between the relationship partners. Such constructions appear to be predominant in the accounts of those relationships dominated by the narrative of 'help', apparently related to the opposing subject positions this narrative makes available.

Cultural similarity appears as a useful resource in the one relationship in this study in which such similarities exist. However, constructions of identity and the relationship's meaning in the others are not necessarily confined to the social differences existing between the partners. In the accounts of those relationships in which a narrative of 'friendship for its own sake' predominates, while recognising difference, the pair do not appear to focus on it. It seems that the more personal sub-narratives, in terms of which the accounts of these relationships are related, make available a variety of alternative subject positions to mentor and mentee, which are not necessarily opposite to each other as they are in the narrative of 'help'. The interactions between these mentors and mentees do not appear to be subject to the constraints apparent in the accounts of relationships dominated by a narrative of 'help'. It further appears that, to the extent that difference is inevitable, it can be managed in ways that reduce the distance between the relationship partners. Some strategies for management of social difference are illustrated with reference to Naefa's account of her relationship with Micaela, in which she uses both practical strategies, as well as tactics making use of the imagination.

3.4. The role of knowledge in relationship accounts

The centrality of 'knowledge' to an understanding of the participants' constructions of the mentoring relationships is related to the binary constructions of self and other discussed in the previous section, and to constructions of the relationships' purpose and meaning in these terms. Again, there is a marked difference between the accounts of those relationships narrated primarily in terms of a narrative of 'help' and those in terms of a narrative of 'friendship for its own sake'.

3.4.1. Knowledge in the narrative of help

In the narrative of 'help' knowledge is constructed as the key instrument of change. Possession of and access to knowledge is inextricably linked to the binary constructions of mentors and mentees. Mentors are knowers, mentees both unknowing and to be known. Mentors' ability to help their mentees is constructed in terms of their superior knowledge. This section will discuss how this aspect of the narrative of 'help' manifests in the accounts of the five relationships in which it is predominant.

Knowledge and the binary construction of mentors and mentees

The following extracts, as well as the extract from Layla's account (section 3.1, quote 3), illustrate constructions of the mentors' ability to help their mentees and of the mentees' need for the relationships in terms of the differential attribution of knowledge:

Kay:

I: Could you give an idea of what it is about you that makes you able to be a mentor?

K: I think, I've been around for forty-four years. I have done a huge amount of things in my life, I really have had a very busy life. Busy in terms of events, I mean not busy in terms of me rushing around like a bee doing stuff. I've just been, I've lived in America, I've lived in South Africa. I'm adopted, I've been, you know, I'm an only child, I've been married, I've been divorced, I've got my own children, I've been a teacher, I, I've just done so many things. And I think all those things- *I know*, I know for

sure that I have been very touched by all these things that I've done and they've all contributed to who I am and how I am. And I've learnt a huge amount. And I must say, I do feel, from that point of view, of being a mentor, that there is so much that I've gotten from the world and from life. And I really want to share it. Because I know that, um, most people don't go through that much. And if I can share a little bit of what I've had with somebody else, who might not go through all those things, then I really want to... So that's why I feel that I can be a mentor... I've been through what I've been through – I think that's the thing. That I, I have experience to share. I have knowledge of what there is around to share. And I think that's about the most that I can do, is share what I know and have experienced. And then let the other person absorb it and do what they do with the stuff, with information. (1)

Layla:

She didn't know much about friends, you know. She just went about things the way everyone else went about things. You know, like, if that's what someone else says, OK, fine, even if it's wrong. She didn't have that- She, she wouldn't think about things, she was just, um, you know, if everyone else in the class does this, I'll do this. (2)

These mentors depict themselves and their ability and purpose in terms of their possession of knowledge which their mentees lack. Kay describes her purpose in the relationship in terms of sharing the “huge amount she has learned” with someone “who might not go through all these things.” She thus constructs herself and her mentee, Janet, in opposite terms, with regard to possession of and access to knowledge. Knowledge in this account thus travels in one direction only. Layla describes herself and Veronique and their relationship in the same terms, focusing in her account on the lack of instrumental and moral knowledge she attributes to Veronique and her community – “They don't know what's best for their future. They just go about and do what they want.” This differential attribution of knowledge and the mentors' purpose to impart it is evident also in the accounts of the mentees. For example:

Berenice:

I: So why d'you think you listen to Vera?

B: Because I know she won't, she won't learn me the wrong stuff, she will always learn the right stuff. (3)

Adam:

I: OK. So she, did she often tell you what you must do, and what you mustn't do, and-?

R: Ja

I: And was that nice? Or not so nice?

R: Ja, it was... Like is nice to, I did learn stuff... Ja. She tells me I mustn't swear in the house, and I mustn't do this in the house, and I must do like wash up in the house, and help my mother make the yard clean, and- (4)

Again in support of the idea that it is only when the narrative of 'help' is overly dominant in these relationships that it becomes problematic, it appears from the above extracts that the mentees do at times appreciate their mentors' ability to teach them. However, as indicated by the extract from Adam's account (section 3.3.1, quote 10), in which he expresses anger at Feroza's continually telling him how he should behave at home, this teaching exceeds acceptable limits in these relationships.

Authorship in the narrative of help

In the accounts of these relationships, mentors are constructed not only as possessing superior moral knowledge but as possessing and being entitled to knowledge about the mentees themselves:

Vera:

I know her family history – I don't know if she knows that I know... When you first start, whatever, you get a piece of paper with their background, their mother, father, job, this has happened to them, there's a history of this, you know. And mother featured quite strongly. But the things that she says about her father and the things that that piece of paper said were two different things. And now I'm not sure if maybe her father has changed, coz that is a possibility, the way, you know? Or if she just, that's what she wants him to be... And I mean last year my dad often used to come fetch me... And they were always so excited to see my dad. Like, you don't understand, they know his name, and, they like, "Hi, Douglas!" And, "Douglas, can we have a lift in your car?" And, you know? Coz I mean it's obviously showing that I have a really good relationship with my father, and maybe a lot of them don't. You know, so- (5)

Feroza says, in continuation of the extract in which she describes the relevance of violence and criminal behaviour in Adam's reality (section 3.2.1, quote 5):

The only thing that they've got going on in that area is like the soccer field, I don't know if you've seen it, that's the only thing. And the principal told me that once the soccer season ends, then they've got nothing to do, then they turn to crime, to violence, that sort of thing. (6)

Both Vera and Feroza make claims about their mentees' realities contrary to the claims of the mentees themselves. Berenice's statements about her father contradict those in the history supplied by the programme. Adam, in contradiction of Feroza's statement above, claims,

And I, I'm always like to, like I go with Jerry, and ask Jerry, like, "I want to know this, I want to know that, I want to know that."...I always go with him to Malmsbury, we did go ride ponies there, and by the farm, we did ride the ponies there...And that is like a race, almost like a race. In the wet now, we must change other clothes. They ride through water, we ride, and it's nice! We ride through the water with the horses, and, ja...And we always go rescue horses...There's other people hitting the horses, and the people 'phone us, the SPC people, we go rescue the horses. And then we take it to us, and we make it fat and so. (7)

While the crime and poor family life to which Feroza and Vera refer may be realities, these mentors appear to make assumptions about the relevance and importance of these in their mentees' subjective experiences, in spite of their mentees' claims to the contrary. It appears from my conversation with Adam that a lack of all activity, other than soccer and crime, to which Feroza refers, is not his experience. Instead his account is filled with stories about his activities on a neighbouring farm, as well as with a mechanic relative whom he enjoys helping in his yard. The lack of relevance for Adam of the criminal activities Feroza suggests as so important has already been discussed with reference to their conversations in which he repeatedly states, "Yes, but I don't *like* it." This is further suggested by his statement that, "My friends, we don't, we not a gang, we just friends." Similarly, as regards the lack of correspondence between the programme's description of Berenice's father and Berenice's own stories about him, Vera assumes that, if either, Berenice's account must be false. She thus casts doubt on the validity of knowledge gained about Berenice's reality from Berenice herself.

Both Feroza and Vera thus appear to prioritise sources such as Adam's school principal and the programme in their understanding of their mentees' realities. These sources, however, potentially provide little information about the mentees' unique experiences and appear to give rise to considerable misunderstanding. Lara's statement about her doubts regarding her own interpretations of Meagan's behaviour is applicable to this situation:

Because it's so different and I don't know much about her social context, one thing I do worry about sometimes is that I assume things that aren't there. I don't know if I assume that, like I'm assuming that she has problems in her family, when there could be nothing wrong, really. So I'm worried that I'm seeing things that aren't there. Or that I look at things, like, too closely to look for something that's wrong...Assuming the worst. (8)

These mentors' knowledge of their mentees is thus based on information provided by sources other than the mentees themselves. This information further appears to emphasise the negative. In this sense, the mentors represent their mentees' realities in terms of the stereotypes discussed with reference to constructions of social difference, potentially creating a distorted picture of the children's subjective worlds.

The requirement for knowledge and the intent to change

The mentors in these accounts not only represent themselves as in possession of knowledge superior to that of their mentees, but as entitled to knowledge of their mentees and their realities.

Feroza:

F: I tried to get things out of him, but he wasn't like willing to open up, you know. Like, "How are things going at school?", you know? That sort of thing. He had a lot of problems at school and I tried to talk to him about it, but he just didn't want to open up with regard to that. Like he had a problem with his principal and I, I don't want to make a judgement that she's wrong or whatever, coz you don't know what's going on there, coz you want to support him, but – he just didn't want to like give me enough information on the real situation... I remember, I think he had an argument with the principal, and she sort of gave him a letter that he had to give to his mother. And he was like so angry. And I sat outside with him and I like asked him what happened – trying to get him to like to let me understand by, in his terms like what actually happened. And just - let him see that he's right, or whatever, just so he can tell me more, that sort of thing... I would basically have to draw things out, ask specific questions. He wouldn't like tell me, "This is what happened and...", you know? "What happened, Why did she do this?", you know, "Did he do anything wrong? Is she always like this with you?" And stuff like that.

I: And then he would answer those questions, but he wouldn't spontaneously give the story?

F: He would answer them, ja. And normally he would have like friends around him and his cousin, then she would like give me more information, because she's very talkative, so she like tells me, then I can like delve into that area further... Ja. And there's this community worker, I think she's like a social worker at the school, and I tried to get information from her side coz she knows them pretty well. Ja, so... I tried to get, you know, information from everybody's side. (9)

Lara:

R: I don't know Bronwyn's history, I was never given her social history, which is what I should have been, but because we're the first group everything's been very haphazard. I'm gonna be getting it soon, but this is sort of eight months, ten months down the line. And, um, coz I was supposed to meet with the social worker before, and then... I'm not sure what happened, we just never got to meet. So I don't actually know her history. Which I think would have been good to know. (10)

In these extracts Feroza and Lara clearly construct themselves as entitled to knowledge about their mentees. For instance, Feroza states that she “tried to get things out of him,” and Lara that she was never given Meagan’s social history, “which is what I should have been.” There is no evidence in the accounts of these relationships that these mentors share any significant information about themselves with their mentees, or that their mentees ask for it. This again implies the unidirectionality of these relationships, this time with reference to the possession and acquisition of knowledge. As above, the knowledge to which these mentors feel entitled goes beyond the accounts of their respective mentees of their realities as they experience them, and extends to that provided by such sources as the school social worker and Adam’s cousin and friends. The purpose of these mentors in gaining information about their mentees does not appear, therefore, to be an understanding of their subjective experiences. Instead, it is the attainment of knowledge about “the real situation” or “what actually happened”. The value of this knowledge is further constructed in terms of its usefulness in enabling the mentors to assess the relevant situation and thus gain insight into how to effect the desired changes, or what moral knowledge they may need to impart. For instance, Feroza says, in answer to my question about what she would have liked to do with the information she attempted to acquire:

If he was in the wrong, maybe try and correctify, or make him see that he was in the wrong. But just guide him to what is, what I think is the right thing. Not impose it on him, just make him come to the realisation that ‘You could’ve been wrong, that, that it should’ve been done this way,’ or whatever.” (11)

Similar patterns of interaction seem present in the accounts of the other mentors who recount their relationships in terms of the narrative of ‘help’.

Layla:

I: And when you went and did the video thing, and you spoke about it afterwards, what did you talk about afterwards?

L: It was actually a video taken at school showing children, and, um, children being bullied physically, and then children being bullied verbally, and who are the victims and who are not the victims, and things like that. And they could identify with a lot of those things, but they were a bit awkward opening up, because it obviously, they had obviously been bullied and things like that. Whether they the victim or whether they the bully...As I said, they were, they didn’t want to say anything, but eventually it came out, you know, “Yes, I’ve been called names.” Um, “I bullied someone.”...We told them the correct way, we told them, you know, “Bullying is not the correct way of

going about things, physically fighting. Um, you should treat someone the way you want to be treated and that kind of thing. It's not good, we gave them a scenario, um, what if like in twenty years time or something, you will be thirty-odd, and your child is being bullied by someone at school. What would you do? And this one girl said, you know, "I would go find her mother and I would bully her." So we found out, we found, we were so shocked at the way their mind works, you know. So we told them, OK, well, you know, would that be an example to you daughter? And she, she didn't know what to say. We, we asked them questions like that and we told them, you know, "Walk away from being bullied... So it was this whole conversation. And it actually sunk in. They actually took everything in. And they were sitting there feeling so bad about the things they've done. And we asked them, "Will you fight again?" And, "Will you bully?" And they were like, "No, we won't, we'll try'n walk away." That kind of thing. (12)

Here Layla and the other mentors present in the story also attempt to gain knowledge about their mentees' behaviour and about "how their mind works" in order that they can teach them "the correct way of going about things." The mentees' accounts echo this association between their mentors' knowledge of their behaviour and ability to correct it, as the following account from Berenice illustrates:

I: And what about, like, if you do something naughty at school? Can you tell Vera?
 B: Yes! Ja, like, when I was standard two and so my teacher told her, she said I mustn't do that, I must stay away from the wrong children, friends of mine. And so I did. She just tells me in a nice way, like-... She just told me I must stay away from that children and, because my teacher told her I'm not interested in my work, and so she said I must, um, I must give attention when the teacher talking in the classroom. And so, yes, I just, I leave that stuff, and I just, I told her it did work, yes... Yes, I said "Yes, I will." (13)

Not only do these constructions of the relationships, and of the mentors and mentees within them, attribute the partners with differential possession of and access and entitlement to knowledge. They appear further to motivate the mentors to pressure their mentees to disclose information they perceive as pertinent to the intended change. This style of interacting appears in these relationships to be ineffective, resulting in mentees attempting to avoid such conversations. For instance Adam, as discussed, resists Feroza's questions, and Meagan avoids telling Lara "bad things". The above accounts of the mentors provide further evidence in this regard. For instance, Feroza states that Adam, "wasn't willing to open up." Not only, therefore, is this style of interacting detrimental to open communication between the relationship partners, but it appears to be self-defeating of its own aims, creating a barrier to the mentors' attainment of the very information they perceive as critical to effecting the relationships' purpose. This finding is confirmed by Morrow and Styles (1995), who

found that mentees not only avoided such interactions, but at times even lied to avoid possible resultant 'lectures'. The frustration and despondency experienced by these mentors as a result of their attempts to extract information and effect change are further identified by Morrow and Styles as characterising the accounts of many 'prescriptive' mentors. This experience is illustrated in the extract from Lara, below, in which she reflects on her reasons for not continuing the relationships beyond the designated year:

And I, sometimes I have no idea what's going on. And I don't feel like I can deal with some of the things...Um, I s'pose in the beginning when she would threaten to go home, I didn't know what to do. I didn't know how to handle it, so I just handled it like I thought I should, but then I didn't even know if I was doing it right. (14)

The narrative of 'help' and the relative importance of information

Vera's and Berenice's accounts illustrate the potential effects of the privileging of certain types of information over others in terms of the narrative of 'help'. The specificity of that information regarded as pertinent, such as information about the mentees' misdemeanours, or about personal difficulties or family problems, may account for some of the inconsistencies between these accounts.

While the importance of knowledge to constructions of the relationships is evident in the accounts of both mentees and mentors, the form of knowledge most relevant in terms of this narrative is less clearly defined in mentees' accounts. This may be explained by their young age and consequently less sophisticated constructions. It appears from the discrepancies between Vera's and Berenice's accounts of their relationship that the focus in Vera's account on the kind of information described above, may contribute to her lack of awareness of the relationship's meaning for Berenice. In terms of the narrative of 'help', a successful relationship is defined partly in terms of its ability to establish trust. This trust is in turn defined as the mentee's ability to disclose highly personal information, predominantly about problems. The importance of this information in terms of this narrative is clearly linked to the relationship's targets for change, for instance school failure, aggression, and so on.

While Berenice claims (section 3.2.1, quote 1) that the “secrets” shared between her and Vera are a highly meaningful aspect of their relationship, Vera states that neither she nor Berenice has “opened up” or “formed a major bond” (section 3.2.1, quote 2). In response to my questions about these inconsistencies, Vera stated that,

The things she does tell me- I must say, she doesn't tell me too much like very personal, personal information, but, like she'll sometimes tell me stuff about her friends. And, um, about, we'll drive past and she'll tell me something about that guy. You know, or about this teacher, or- You know? Like obviously in the hope that I won't say anything, otherwise I don't think she would tell me. (15)

It may be that Vera refers in this extract to the same events to which Berenice refers as “sharing secrets” but that the focus of the narrative of ‘help’ on “very personal, personal information” renders other information, such as that described, irrelevant. The conversations Berenice cites in her initial description of their relationship, may be those to which Vera refers here. However, Vera clearly does not attribute them sufficient importance as makes them worthy of mention without direct questioning. It is possible, therefore, that Vera's lack of awareness of the significance of the relationship for Berenice may be related to discrepancies between the meanings ascribed to the events by Berenice and herself, and the preordained importance, in terms of the narrative of ‘help’, of particular kinds of events.

The above constructions of mentoring relationships thus appear to affect them negatively in a number of ways. Not only are the mentors unable to acquire the information they desire, but the pressure they exert on their mentees to disclose personal information inhibits the mentees' ability to communicate openly. That which the mentees do communicate may further be relegated to ‘second rate’ status or irrelevancy. As supported by previous research, this pattern of interaction appears to lead to mentors' feelings of despondency about the relationship's worth and the mentors' competence within it.

3.4.2. Knowledge in the narratives of 'friendship for its own sake'

Again, mentors and mentees and the relationships' meaning are constructed very differently in those accounts dominated by a narrative of 'friendship for its own sake' with regard to the attribution and entitlement to knowledge. Rather than the binary constructions of mentors as 'knowers' and mentees as 'known' or 'unknowing', there appears to be a far greater tendency toward equality in these relationships, and a two-way flow of information. As illustrated in the extracts from Naefa's and Daneel's relationships (section 3.3.2, quotes 9 and 11), these mentors construct their ability to help their mentees not in terms of superior knowledge, but in terms of similarities of experience. Instead of 'passing down' knowledge, this similar experience enables them to "relate" to their mentees' difficulties, or to offer a model on which they can actively draw in negotiating their own lives.

'Not knowing' and authorship of self

Naefa:

And she never says, when I give her something, she never says thank you, or stuff like that...I don't want to become threatening towards her, and I don't want to teach her, because I don't want her to look at me like a parent, or a, um, a stern adult figure. I don't want to tell her, you know, you're supposed to say thank you, and stuff like that. I don't want to be like that. I, it's not my place and I'm sure that she probably has her reasons for being like that, but obviously she's not going to tell me. So I'll just sort of let it be. (1)

And:

I: And how does she respond, like when you ask her if she's seen her father, and-
 N: She's very nonchalant, she'll just say, well, "I don't know," or- you know?
 I: And then what, how do you respond?
 N: Well, mostly I'll just leave it at that, because I don't want her to feel as if I'm pressing her for information, or, you know, like this is a counselling session, or anything like that. (2)

Daneel:

Her teacher confronted me about Marlein being naughty. So, I wasn't impressed with that because she put Marlein on the spot... (3)

In these accounts, as illustrated in the extracts above, the mentors position themselves as 'not knowing' (Shotter, 1993), rather than as in possession of or entitled to knowledge about their mentees. The extract from Naefa's account, in which she states, with regard to Micaela's failure to say thank you, "I'm sure that she probably has her reasons for being like that, but obviously she's not going to tell me," is in direct contrast with Vera's account. Vera states, instead, that Berenice "doesn't say thank you...But obviously they, they haven't been taught to say thank you for things." While Vera assumes knowledge of the reasons for Berenice's behaviour, Naefa not only acknowledges her lack of this knowledge, but does not position herself as entitled to it – "I'll just sort of let it be." The acknowledgement and respect for the mentees' knowledge evident in these accounts further implies the potential for the mentees to be authors of themselves within these relationships. This is indicated in Daneel's statement that, "If you're bad by your friends...then with me she's good because I don't know that bad side of her. So...(she) can just be what (she) want(s) to be and kind of be relaxed in a way." The absence of preconceived expectations, unlike Feroza's constructions of Adam's reality, apparently allow Marlein the 'space' to exercise greater choice in terms of how she constructs herself. This opportunity for increased agency in the construction of self can be seen, in terms of Shotter's (1993) argument, as necessary to the existence of equality between the relationship partners. According to Shotter, to be merely involved in the reproduction of a reality defined in the terms of others is to be forever deficient relative to those others. In order to be an equal participant, one must be able to be an equal author of the relationship reality and to 'carve out' one's own position within it.

It appears that the greater equality in terms of the attribution of knowledge, and the less pressuring of mentees for disclosure allows for more open communication between the relationship partners. This is suggested by the nature of the conversations that appear to take place between these mentors and their mentees, for instance those between Feroza and Melanie (section 3.1 quotes 7 and 8). In these conversations, unlike Adam, Janet and Berenice, as discussed previously, who are confined to answering questions, unable to discuss "unimportant stuff" or to contribute significantly to conversations respectively, Melanie and Feroza appear to exchange opinions, for instance about Michael Jackson. Feroza names Melanie's liking of particular topics as the reason for their discussion, indicating that she does not

dominate the topics in this relationship as she does in her relationship with Adam. The extent of the equality between them in this sense is evident in Melanie's ability not only to introduce the topics, as in her statement, "I first talk, then she talks. She first give me a chance before she talks... We talk to each other," but in her ability even to contradict Feroza on moral matters:

I: And what did Feroza say?

R: She didn't say, she only said, um, there was the one man who was standing on the rocks when the waves were there. And so she said that, "What are you gonna do if the man falls off there? So I said, "I'm gonna do nothing, he risk his own life, he commit suicide."

I: (Laughs) So what did Feroza say then?

R: "But you must help the man."... So I say "No, he risk his own life," and that he committed suicide. (4)

The authorship of self available to the mentees within these relationships, extends beyond the trivialities of their conversations to the very matters intended as the long-term outcomes of the programme, such as mentees' future goals.

Daneel:

She wants to help people, so I said, "OK, in what context d'you wanna help – d'you wanna be a doctor, d'you wanna be a teacher?" She says, "Nee, I wanna be like you." I said, "what's me?" So she says, "No, doing things like you do, like help people and stuff." So I said, "OK, social work?"... So she says, "Ja, social work."... So I said, "OK, well, you'll have to study one day... But... I haven't really focused on, like, social work. Because she's still too young to really know what she wants to do. So, she needs to discover it for herself... but what I am doing, I'm just trying to build her confidence, and to build, to almost like, um, give her access to like... books and, um, interesting things that she can learn from, like poetry. I'm trying to stimulate areas that will gradually build up to, I mean, if you as an individual can constantly learn to have good self-esteem and confidence, then you will eventually know what you want in life. (5)

Marlein:

I: Yesterday Meagan and Veronique were saying Samantha encourages you to want to be something when you're big?

R: No... I must learn myself. They can't tell me. (6)

Feroza:

F: She's a very bright child. And she's like, she's been talking about what she wants to become one day. And she'd like to become an artist, so... She's so clever, she's just so clever, and I think the fact that her mother doesn't have that much time for her does, it really stunts her growth in that field. So what I'm trying to do is just allow her to express herself more. Coz I think she's got a lot of potential – she's very clever... She likes writing poems and that sort of thing. (7)

Naefa:

I think I've tried to sort of set an example, by giving her a model of behaviour, you know sharing my own experiences, and then thinking that by, maybe she could not necessarily copy, or imitate mine, but that she could, you know, that um, that she can, sort of a model that she can use when she draws up her own goals. (8)

Rather than attempting to direct their mentees' behaviour, these mentors emphasise the agency and independence of their mentees in this regard. While Daneel encourages Marlein's ideas regarding social work, she recognises that these may be more a reflection of her own goals, or Marlein's perception thereof, rather than, and more importantly, "discovering (what she wants) for herself." The extract from Marlein's account supports that from Daneel's. She depicts herself as entitled to, and in fact more capable than Daneel, of authoring her own goals – "I must learn myself. She can't tell me." These mentors focus on providing resources that may encourage and enable their mentees to follow the direction of their choice, rather than on imparting knowledge which they are expected to absorb, and so directing them as they see fit.

Comparison of Feroza's approach to Melanie and her future goals and that which she takes with regard to Adam and his goals provides an interesting insight into the responsive nature of the mentors' actions. With regard to Adam, Feroza states:

Coz he always told me he wanted to be a professional soccer player, and he wasn't really interested in school, so I could see that I couldn't push that issue there. So I tried to get him to generate options like, "But you must have a second option in case it doesn't work out, being a soccer player. Although I know you're gonna be rich and famous one day, what you gonna do if it doesn't happen?" And that sort of thing, you know? Trying to play around there (laughs). And he was just, "No, I'm gonna play soccer, that's all." (9)

Feroza thus treats Melanie's goals and ideals with respect but undermines Adam's – "Although I know you're gonna be rich and famous one day, what you gonna do if it doesn't happen?" The reason for the difference in her approach with her two successive mentees is left to speculation. It appears, however, that it may be related to the fact that her values are distinctly different from Adam's and similar to Melanie's. This is suggested by the importance she places in her accounts on academic achievement, and an apparently corresponding value on Melanie's part, implied by her interest in art and poetry. The discrepancy between her values and Adam's is

implied not only by his ambition only to play soccer, but also by his apparent lack of interest in schoolwork – “ I know his reading’s poor because I tried to help him once but he just didn’t seem interested in that sort of thing.” Feroza’s ability to give Melanie the freedom to construct her own goals may therefore be related to a correspondence of values, and her undermining of Adam’s similar efforts to a discrepancy in this regard. Again, as discussed with regard to social similarity and difference, similar values may not be a necessary requirement for successful relationships. Difference in this regard may however require some work, as displayed by Naefa with regard to the social and cultural differences between herself and Micaela.

Narratives of ‘friendship’ and direction of the flow of knowledge

In the accounts of these relationships not only do the mentees contribute significantly to authoring the relationship reality and themselves within it, but learning is not expected to occur in one direction only. While Melanie claims to be helping Feroza with her Afrikaans, the following extracts from Naefa’s relationship with Micaela further illustrate the point:

Naefa:

It’s so much different from reading about it or watching it on the TV. And you only live your life, so you only get experience of your own lived reality. But, you know, just going to the school and interacting with the other kids as well, you become aware of the harsh realities of their life. There’s this one boy at her school who works after school, he works on a farm. And then he comes home late at night, twelve o’clock, and then he still has to go and do schoolwork as well. And for me, when I was at school, you know, I wasn’t expected to do things like that, and it makes you think, how he can manage to do all of that...And the, you know, I admire some of those kids, especially Micaela. I don’t, you know, I wouldn’t be able to cope if I would, if I was in her situation. Ja, and it’s a two-way experience. I mean I don’t only expect her to learn from me, but I have learned a lot from her as well. (10)

Micaela:

I: What other things have you done with her? What other days can you remember when you’ve done something that was really nice?

M: When we played netball...She can’t play – we learned her.

I: And what else can you remember about that day – what did you say, and what did she say, and all that?

M: Um, “If you wanna shoot, you, um, you must take a step back or, um, to the front.” And then she just do it. (11)

The flow of knowledge in these relationships thus appears to be in both directions. As Naefa says, “I don’t only expect her to learn from me, but I have learned a lot from her as well.” She further states, “You only live your life, so you only get experience of your lived reality,” implying reciprocity of the learning process within these relationships. Phillip and Hendry (2000) identify this process of mutual exchange as important to relationship success, emphasising the opportunity for mentors to gain insight into the experiences of youth and to learn from these for themselves. Again there is a direct contrast with the accounts of those mentors who construct their relationships in terms of the narrative of ‘help’. While outside sources of knowledge are privileged in this narrative, Naefa explicitly prioritises knowledge gained through interaction with the children themselves, over that gained through “reading about it or watching it on TV.” Rather than constructing these children’s knowledge and abilities as inferior to her own, she expresses “admiration” for their ability to cope with their circumstances. This is again in keeping with previous research findings about positive relationships, for instance the importance of the mentor’s ability to listen, understand and affirm the mentee’s own knowledge (Liang et al., 2002). Micaela, in her more child-like way, similarly constructs both partners as in possession of knowledge, and the flow of information as bi-directional, for instance in her ability to teach Naefa to play netball.

The flow of knowledge similarly is not unidirectional in terms of the communication of personal information. Rather than mentors merely attempting to obtain information about their mentees, as in those relationships constructed primarily in terms of the narrative of ‘help’, these mentors appear to place some importance on the sharing of personal information about themselves too. For instance, Naefa makes the following statement:

And she’s not somebody for offering information, you know, for saying things or asking things about me, I’ve asked her, like, “Is there anything you’d like to know about me or about my family?” So I will offer things, you know? And then she will come up later, and then I’ll actually be surprised, because she will tell her friends about me and my family, and they’ll come back and ask me, and I’ll be you know, like, I, I will feel honoured in a sense. That she actually listened to what I said, and, and that she went and told other people. (12)

In terms of the priority given to particular types of information in the narrative of ‘help’, personal information about the mentors is rendered unnecessary or irrelevant. Within a narrative of ‘friendship for its own sake’, however, the value of information is not subject to the same criterion in terms of its usefulness in helping the mentees. Rather, the focus on friendship allows a wider range of information to be meaningful, and in fact allows the process of mutual exchange to be constructed as valuable in itself. It appears thus that there is a much greater degree of reciprocity in the latter relationships, manifested in a variety of ways.

Teaching as a subsidiary element of these relationships

Again, the narrative of ‘help’ does exist as a sub-narrative in the accounts of these relationships. Consideration of the form it assumes in these cases provides some insight into the nature of the negative implications of this narrative in those relationships in which it is dominant. As in the constructions of the mentees’ need for the relationships in these accounts, and of the form of help to which they appear responsive, the manner in which these mentors teach their mentees appears to be related to more specific events. For instance, Melanie cites Feroza’s helping her to count “*big numbers*” (section 3.3.2, quote 18) and Marlein refers to Daneel’s ability to “show me where am I wrong and where am I right” (section 3.2.2, quote 1) with regard to those things about which she cannot talk to other adults. These examples are in contrast to the more general deficiencies, related to stigmatising constructions of identity, with regard to which those mentors who recount their relationships in terms of the narrative of ‘help’ attempt to teach their mentees. For examples of this, refer to section 3.1, quote 3, in which Layla makes reference to Veronique’s lack of the morals and values she hopes to impart, and to section 3.2.1, quote 5, in which Feroza attempts to teach Adam about the consequences of gangsterism and drugs she assumes must be of relevance to him.

The mentees in the accounts of relationships narrated as friendships for their own sakes are further attributed with agency in their own learning process. Those mentees in relationships constructed in terms of the narrative of ‘help’ are expected simply to ‘absorb’ the information and adjust their behaviour accordingly. Mentees in these relationships, however, are narrated as the agents of their own learning, drawing on

resources their mentors provide. This is well illustrated by the extract from Naefa's account in which she attempts to teach Micaela about the experience of a teacher who has a "rowdy class to contend with" (section 3.3.2, quote 21). In this extract, rather than imparting information, Naefa makes available an experience from which Micaela can learn for herself.

3.4.3. Summary

Constructions of mentors and mentees in terms of knowledge, and the role this is attributed in the relationships' purpose, are substantially different between the two kinds of relationships. Within the narrative of 'help', knowledge is constructed as the key instrument of change. The mentors, as the agents of this change, are constructed as possessing superior knowledge, and their purpose is to disseminate it. In teaching their mentees "the correct way", these mentors further require and are entitled to knowledge about their mentees and their realities. As in Morrow and Styles's study, however, their resultant excessive interest in this regard, and attempts at acquiring pertinent information, are met by avoidance of such interactions on the part of their mentees, so hindering attempts at communication. That information which is acquired from the mentees themselves is subordinated to the 'superior' knowledge gained from external sources, relegating mentees' knowledge to an inferior status. The greater importance attributed to certain forms of information within the context of the narrative of 'help' further appears to engender mentors' lack of awareness of the value for their mentees of those interactions not in keeping with these definitions.

Within those relationships recounted in terms of a narrative of 'friendship for its own sake', similar inequality related to constructions of self and possession of and access to knowledge is not apparent. Instead, these mentors adopt a position of 'not knowing' with regard to their mentees and their experiences, validating and respecting their mentees' own knowledge in this regard, as well as their choice in sharing it. The mentees in these relationships are thus constructed as authors of their own lives and realities, both in terms of their ability to define themselves in their own terms, and, for example, to set their own goals. Instead of attempting to direct their mentees or to

disseminate 'correct' knowledge, these mentors focus on giving their mentees access to resources which enable them to make their own choices. A far more equal basis for the relationships is thereby established, within which the flow of knowledge is bi-directional. Communication is thereby enhanced and reciprocal exchange is valued, rather than the attainment or dissemination of information. While these mentors do at times attempt to teach their mentees, these interactions occur as subsidiary elements of the relationships and are devoid of the stigmatising constructions whereby mentees are seen as deficient relative to their mentors.

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3.5. The relationships' meaning and the narrative plot

According to Hermans and Kempen (1993) the plot of a narrative functions to transform an otherwise purely chronological listing of events into a coherent story, highlighting certain events as more relevant than others to the story's development. In this sense, plot sequences are inseparable from constructions of the relationships' meaning and that of the events and actors within them. A cause-effect sequence is predominant in the accounts of relationships dominated by the narrative of 'help'. However, the narrative of 'friendship for its own sake' allows greater fluidity in the constructions of the relationship's events, which tend to be less linear and unidirectional. Meaning is thus able to emerge within the participants' understandings of their relationships unrestricted by the cause-effect sequence of the narrative of help.

3.5.1. The cause-effect plot in the narrative of help

The narrative of help is structured in terms of a cause-effect plot. In terms of this plot, the mentors, as agents, bring about the desired changes in their mentees. I will argue that construction of the relationships in terms of this causal sequence is self-defeating, and has negative effects on the interactions between the partners, diminishing the likelihood of change.

Tangible effects and the relationships' worth

The 'success' of the causal sequence described above is paramount in constructions of the relationships' meaning in the narrative of 'help'.

Layla:

I mean all that effort that I've put into this whole thing, and it just ends, you know? It just feels (laughs) incomplete. I feel like, you know I've made a difference, but I haven't made that much of a difference. That's how I'm feeling...I can't see changes, that's the problem, I suppose...I can't see the actual changes. Ja, I can't see the effects.

But, um, that's what I was actually going to find out from teachers, and what they see, have I changed anything? Coz from what I can see, I can't see specific things. It's a bit difficult. (1)

And:

L: I would have liked to have seen her treating her friends in a better way, I s'pose, as a start. Um, because I see that she's quite defensive, things like that. I think that would have been a start, I don't know if it's much, but that would have been *something* for me. It would have been something for me...I was just hoping that from all the sessions she would eventually, but I don't think I've gotten that effect on her. But that would be one of the things....Um, her attitude towards things...So that's one of the things I want to change.

I: And in terms of actually trying to realise those goals, is there anything specific that you've done to realise those intentions?

L: Well, um, if I think of specific examples – it's small things that I've taught her, for instance, like, um, when, was it last week, when we got there, and they just disappointed all of us. Because they said, "No, we, we going with the school, we going to play netball...And when we got there, I went to her and told her, if anything like this happens, please 'phone me beforehand. Sort of like teaching her that consideration of others. That kind of thing. Coz I told her that when I can't make it then I would 'phone her, on the day or before. Um, you know, small things like that. We've done that quite a bit with them. Considering others' feelings, and, um, you can't just do that because, you know, she's gonna feel bad. (2)

Lara says of her reasons for joining the programme:

I suppose it's just nice to know that I could be doing something to help. I mean I just keep thinking she's an eleven-year-old, and thinking of all the things she might have gone through, or might have witnessed, or experienced.. And it's quite scary. I mean I'm like twenty, and I'm still, I mean I struggle to deal with things, so I can't imagine what it is for her. And I can only hope that she'll grow up decent...Finish high school, get herself a job...Meagan's very academic, which is why I really want her to finish high school. And I would hope that she would carry on studying, but I don't think she can. And I honestly hope she could get a nice job...I suppose education has just been the most salient aspect of the whole thing...That was one of the things, um, at the very beginning of the whole training, they say, "What are you hoping to do, and how can you help a child?" So when they match you, and I think that's why I was matched with Meagan, coz I said I'm very academic, and um, that was my strong point, and I said I would like to be able to help her with her homework, and any problems she has. (3)

In these accounts, in which Layla reflects on the value of her relationship in terms of its 'success' in bringing about tangible effects, and Lara on her reasons for joining the programme, the meaning of their relationships is constructed in terms of future events external to the relationships. This focus is evident in all the accounts of mentors who narrate their relationships in terms of this narrative. Vera is the exception. Her account contains all the features of this narrative, as discussed, but retains a focus on

the relationship itself, as one intended to ‘help’ Berenice. She makes no significant reference to the effects of this help.

In these extracts, Layla locates the value of the relationship in its ability to influence Veronique’s interactions with her friends, and Lara in its ability to help Meagan to “grow up decent” and to “finish high school” and “get herself a job.” Layla further describes how her actions, such as telling Veronique how one should treat others, are intended to bring about the desired results. In terms of this causal sequence, the meaning of these relationships is restricted to one of two fixed outcomes – success or failure in producing tangible results. Evaluation of the relationships in these terms further appears to produce feelings of frustration or despondency in these mentors. For instance, Layla speaks of “all the effort I’ve put into this whole thing and it just ends...I can’t see the actual changes,” doubting the value of her relationship with Veronique in these terms. Previous research shows that an over focus on outcomes may in fact mitigate against the relationships’ potential to bring about positive change. The potential for longevity, commonly agreed as a requirement for positive outcomes, may be undermined by these constructions, resulting in the frustration and fear of failure cited as among the most common reasons for which mentors terminate prematurely (Rhodes, 2002a). Similar feelings are expressed to varying degrees in the accounts of all the mentors who narrate their relationships in terms of this narrative. For instance Lara states with regard to her intention to help Meagan, “I often feel that I don’t, I often feel that I’m making it worse.”

The cause-effect sequence and the meaning of events

In accordance with the above causal constructions of the relationships’ purpose and meaning, these mentors narrate the particular relationship events in similar terms.

Kay says, after describing her approach to matters such as Janet’s schoolwork:

And then, I must say, I did make the point about how important it is to get a good education. But then, I didn’t go on and on pontificating about this good education, which I would with my children. I actually sat and, for a split second I thought to myself, “ah, you gotta think of a good reason why it’s good to get a good education, coz otherwise she’s not gonna buy this crap. You know, as far as she’s concerned it’s crap. And it’s hard work. She already wants to leave school. And so I said to her, “Ooh, yes, Janet, you still want to be a florist?” And she said, “Yes.” So I said, “Mmm, you

know, without a decent Matric, or without a decent school-leaving certificate, you can't do that. And I know you wanna get out of Maitland village." It's every child's dream to get out of the village. It's not a nice place to live. And she said, "Oh, god, I can't wait." So I said, "Ah, you want your ticket out, finishing school is the way to go." And so straight away, about fifteen minutes later she said, "Kay, I think I better go early. You're gonna have to drop me at Cape Youth Care, coz I've got lots of homework to do." So it definitely had an impact. Whether it was just for that day I don't know. But at least it had an impact...I think that's the whole point of the Big Brother Big Sister thing, that you can talk to them and they gonna listen. Whereas sometimes they might not listen to authority figures. (4)

Layla:

And I've been trying so hard. I thought I was doing something wrong. Which was, um, they told me that feeling's quite normal, but, um, it wasn't me. Because she, she was quite happy for me to be there each session. It's just that she didn't want to open up...Um, at first I didn't go about it in the right way, coz, OK, before I asked advice, I was going about it in the completely wrong way...I was asking her questions about herself, which is not a good thing. I, even though she never answered me I told her about myself, thinking, OK, that maybe she'll, you know?...That didn't work.

I: Doesn't sound so wrong, though.

R: It never worked. And then they told me I should, I shouldn't expect anything from her, I should just do activities with her, and not, um, schoolish activities. Just, um, natural things like paging through a magazine, for instance. Just, just things. Maybe she would open up. (5)

Kay speaks of her style of communicating with Janet in terms of the effects it appears to produce in her. Not only does she make a causal link between her actions and what become Janet's reactions, but she states that this link is the salient feature of the relationship – "I think that's the whole point of the Big Brother Big Sister thing, that you can talk to them and they gonna listen." With regard to Veronique's reticence, although the case manager has told Layla that, "it wasn't me" she persists in constructing her actions as causal in her account – "I was asking her questions about herself, which is not a good thing. Even though she never answered me I told her about myself...It never worked." While she overtly claims that she was not the cause of Veronique's behaviour, her change in approach after advice from the programme is presented as more likely to bring about the desired effect – "Maybe she would open up."

The effects of the mentors' help are less prominent in the accounts of the mentees. As in the case of their less sophisticated constructions of the forms of information most relevant in terms of the narrative of 'help', this may be a result of their age and potential to think in terms of long term consequences. Their accounts, however, do

provide some examples of the construction of relationship interactions in terms of the effects they produce. For instance in section 3.4.1, quote 13, from Berenice's account, she describes how Vera's telling her how to behave in class had the desired effect – "I told her it did work, yes... Yes, I said I will!"

As in the case of constructions of knowledge in terms of this narrative, constructions of the relationships in terms of a cause-effect sequence render certain events more important or meaningful than others. Again, this may lead to discrepancies in the meaning of the relationships for mentors and mentees. This is particularly evident in the accounts of those relationships in which mentors express doubt as to the relationship's value in terms of its potential to bring about change, as in the case of Layla and Lara above. The value attached to these relationships by the mentees, however, does not appear to be in terms of the effects they produce, but rather in terms of their 'in-the-moment' meaning. The following quotes illustrate.

Berenice:

I: And was there ever a time when you really realised Vera was your friend?

B: If she like, she'll phone me if sometimes I don't expect she are coming, then she coming to me. Then she say, "Come, we are going out now.," she are coming to me like that. (6)

Janet:

And she also, she bought me on my birthday, she did bought me a present. She wasn't there, but she bought me a present... Like a, like a soap and a (inaudible) she bought me... I made her a thank you card to say thank you for bought me a present... At her old house, when I was there I saw the thank you card was standing on the dressing table. (7)

These mentees thus present the important relationship events as those which were meaningful or enjoyable in themselves, providing some sort of pleasure through the fact of their occurrence rather than through a further chain of events they might produce. It may be that the lack of importance ascribed to such events in terms of the narrative of 'help', and the overriding importance placed on the success of the causal sequence, accounts for these mentors' frequent lack of awareness of the value of their relationships for their mentees.

3.5.2. Plot sequences in the narratives of ‘friendship for its own sake’

All the relationships in this study are constructed to some extent in terms of the help they might provide to the mentees. As already discussed, however, this purpose is not paramount in those relationships dominated by a narrative of ‘friendship for its own sake’. The plot sequence in terms of which these relationships are narrated is therefore not the causal sequence discussed with regard to the narrative of ‘help’. It appears in these accounts that the form of help offered by these mentors does not relate so much to changes in the mentees or events external to the relationships, but is rather constructed in terms of their benefits in the present, and in terms of the relationship interactions themselves.

Plot sequences in descriptions of the mentors’ purpose

The following quotes illustrate constructions of the relationships’ purpose in the accounts of relationships dominated by a narrative of ‘friendship for its own sake’.

Naefa says of her reasons and intentions on joining the programme:

I thought this would be a nice time to interact with somebody else who you don’t really know, and get to know them, and see how that relationship develops. (1)

There is clearly no causal sequence implied in this extract. Instead of the outcomes of the relationship, Naefa focuses in her description of her intentions on the interactions themselves. From the rest of her account, these are clearly constructed as a reciprocal process. Her statement of her intention to “see how the relationship develops” further implies a lack of the fixed outcomes associated with the cause-effect plot, in terms of which the relationship can either be a ‘success’ or a ‘failure’ depending on its ability to effect change. The same is implied by the mentors’ constructions of their mentees’ needs for the relationships, which are met by “just being there” or by providing the “quality communication time” that they lack.

The following extract from Daneel's account provides some insight into the sense in which an awareness of their overall purpose to positively influence their mentees' development can co-exist with an emphasis on the relationship interactions themselves:

There's no use drilling into her all the time about the future, about goals, and this, when you don't have anything, you don't have the resources right now. So what you have right now, work at it. And it will, it will gradually build up... You see it's, it's like a cake, for example. You're adding, and then obviously the end result will work out. (2)

While Daneel refers here to the relationship's outcomes, her focus is on the present events, its results being left 'in trust', so to speak. The extracts in which she describes her intention to provide Marlein with the necessary resources that she might make her own decisions, for example section 3.4.2, quote 5, further imply Marlein's agency in her own development. The developmental process is thereby constructed in a less linear fashion, and not in terms of the direct causal sequence in which the mentor sets in motion a chain of anticipated events. The agency attributed to the mentees in terms of the learning process, as before, provide further examples of similar constructions.

These mentors appear to explicitly reject both the desirability and the possibility of a causal relationship between their actions and their mentees' behaviour, as illustrated in the following quotes.

Naefa:

Coz I wouldn't want her, I don't expect her to be like me, or, you know, I just want her to be the best that she can be, and if that's the kind of person that she is, then, you know, I'll just, it's, I'll accept it, I'm fine with that. (3)

Daneel:

I mean, I can't tell her, "Marlein, behave," and then expect her to behave. Because she's not gonna behave even if I tell her. You know, she's a child. (4)

And:

I would have liked to help her develop relationships. But the only relationship I could develop is us together. And I couldn't develop anything else. (5)

Thus, constructions of the relationships in terms of their potential to produce long-term effects in the mentee are present in these accounts. This goal, however, appears

to be subordinated in the enactment of these relationships to interactions valued in the present moment for their own sakes. Any ensuing changes are constructed as the results of the mentees' agency, a less direct relationship between their developmental outcomes and the mentorships thereby created. The construction of the relationships and of the achievement of positive outcomes in this manner may, in terms of Rhodes's (2002c) argument, have interesting implications for the likelihood of their event. According to Rhodes, who applies findings about therapeutic relationships to mentorships, the likelihood that positive changes ensuing from these relationships will be lasting ones is far greater when individuals attribute these changes to their own efforts. Again, this implies that the cause-effect constructions of relationships may be self-defeating.

Communication, meaning and the lack of intention to change

This lack of intention to change the mentees may further account for their ability to be more open with their mentors, especially with regard to negative behaviours which might, in terms of the narrative of 'help', be regarded as the relationships' targets for change. This is illustrated in the following extract from Micaela's account:

I: And if you do something naughty at school? D'you tell Naefa?

M: (Nods)

I: Is it? And what does she say?

M: "Don't be naughty!"

I: (Laughs) And what do you say?

M: "I can't help it!"

I: (Laughs) And then what does she say?

M: (Imitates Naefa's teasing voice) "No, I can't help it!" (6)

The freedom apparent in this quote is in contrast to the accounts of many other mentees, such as Meagan and Adam, who depict their mentors as taking an inordinate interest in their behaviour, and attempt to avoid such conversations. Naefa's teasing reaction to Micaela's statement, "I can't help it!" is evidence that she does not attempt to act on Micaela in order to correct her behaviour. This may account for the openness with which Micaela expresses herself in this regard. Micaela's communication can further be seen as indicative of the kind of relationship atmosphere intended by the

programme, in which mentees feel able to communicate with their mentors about both positive and negative elements of their lives and realities.

The relative fluidity of the plot sequences in these relationships further allows the relationships' meaning, and the roles of the mentors and mentees within them, to be constructed in multiple and less prescribed ways. The relative correspondence between the accounts of the mentors and mentees in these relationships, with regard to the relationships' meaning, may further be attributed to this lack of a prescribed plot. Events are thus not interpreted by the mentors in terms of a preconceived order of importance, allowing for greater responsiveness to their mentees' perceptions in their assessments of the relationship's events. This may in turn be related to the greater satisfaction evident in these relationships, in which mentors are neither confined to interpreting events with reference to outcomes, nor under duress to influence events beyond their relationships.

3.4.3. Summary

All the relationships in this study are constructed to some extent in terms of their purpose to help their mentees. However, the different narrative forms through which they are recounted make available different constructions of the relationships' meaning and events in this regard. A cause-effect plot sequence predominates in the narrative of 'help'. The fixed outcomes of the relationships in terms of this sequence cast doubt on the mentors' perceptions of the relationships' meaning. In these terms, relationships are not perceived as 'successful' unless their ability to produce effects external to the relationship is evident. The selective importance ascribed to the relationships' events in this regard further appears to render much of the meaning and value attributed to these relationships by the mentees 'invisible' to their mentors.

The relative fluidity of the plot sequences available within narratives of 'friendship for its own sake' appear to enable departure from this focus on outcomes and an alternative focus on the interactions themselves, and 'in-the-moment' benefits they may provide. This focus appears further to allow greater freedom within their

interactions, their value not being confined to the tangible effects they might produce. Rather, these interactions are constructed as valuable in multiple different ways, the mentors' constructions of value apparently more responsive to their mentees' perceptions than to preconceived notions of intended effects.

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4. CONCLUSION

This final chapter will summarise the findings of this study, synthesising these with the existing literature on mentoring, as well as pointing to new ideas that have emerged in this study. This study has both confirmed the findings of previous research into mentorships, as well as extended these findings in a number of ways.

Overall, the analysis presented in the previous chapter has explored the subjective experiences of the mentors and mentees in this study, attempting to draw out recurrent patterns across the narratives, while at the same time trying to maintain a sense of the coherence of the narratives of individual relationships. It is evident from this analysis that there are threads of commonality running through these narratives, allowing broad classification of the relationships into two categories. There is also, however, substantial individuality in the way in which these relationships are animated in each instance, accounting for variation and commonality both within and between the two groups.

This analysis has attempted to draw attention to the ways in which participants' narrative constructions of the mentorships interact with the more overt qualities of these relationships, such as intimacy of communication, mentors' ability to understand the subjective experiences of their mentees, equal participation in the relationships, and so on. It has further attempted to draw attention to the interaction between constructions of social difference and constructions of self, other and the meaning of their relationships. The impact of these constructions on relationship development assumes particular relevance in the context of a newly established programme in South Africa's socio-political climate, in which there is a high degree of racial and economic segregation. Within this climate mentees almost invariably come from the underprivileged sectors and mentors from the privileged ones, due to difficulty experienced in recruiting mentors from the same communities as their mentees.

Previous findings and the present study

The relationships dominated by narratives of 'friendship for its own sake' and those dominated by the narrative of 'help' display the qualities associated by previous research with positive and negative relationships, respectively. Characteristics of relationships dominated by a narrative of 'friendship for its own sake', and identified by previous research as associated with strong relationships or positive outcomes, can be summarised as follows: Mentors are sensitive and responsive to their mentees' needs and circumstances, displaying an ability to empathise with them, and to listen, understand and affirm their mentees' own knowledge. Equality and reciprocity are prominent in these relationships. A trusting, respectful and non-judgmental atmosphere is thereby created, in which mentees feel free to discuss sensitive topics, as well as to enlist their mentors' help, without pressure from their mentors in this regard. Mentees thus play an active role in defining the nature of their relationships, and the roles that the mentors play in their lives. The mentors in these relationships further display an ability to find ways of helping their mentees which are acceptable to them, and to adjust expectations, to fit their mentees' realities.

Those relationships dominated by a narrative of 'help' display qualities opposite to those described above, and associated by previous research with poor or failed relationships. These mentors attempt to control both their relationships and their mentees, and to 'pass down' advice, models of behaviour, and so on, instead of affirming the mentees' own knowledge as described above. They further appear to be 'change-driven', with narrowly defined goals, imposing their own values on their mentees and thereby undermining their cultural and social identities. They consequently pressure their mentees to disclose sensitive information and are prescriptive about the areas in which they offer help. Mentees in turn appear to dodge conversations about problem areas, with the result that they are unable to ask their mentors for help when they need it. When relationships and mentees fail to live up to their expectations, these mentors experience considerable frustration, evidencing a failure to adjust preconceived ideas and roles.

Narratives of the relationships

Use of the narrative method and the very small sample enabled this study to explore participants' underlying constructions of their relationships. Previous research is based primarily on quantitative indices of relationship quality, or participants' overt statements about their relationships. This study has therefore extended previous findings by exploring the interaction of these with the partners' underlying constructions. In this regard, this study has shown that the qualities of relationships appear to be the result of a reciprocal process, within which the partners jointly produce narratives of their relationships, thus jointly making available possibilities for its enactment.

Construction of the relationships in terms of the narrative of 'help' can be summarised as follows: These mentors and mentees define the purpose of their relationships in terms of their potential to help the mentees, and thereby to effect changes in their attitudes and behaviour. This understanding of the relationships and their meaning leads to definition of the mentors and mentees in opposite terms – only mentors can help mentees. The mentors thus become the agents of the relationships and of any ensuing changes, and the mentees the passive recipients of their help. A unidirectional pattern of interaction is thereby established, which permeates all aspects of these relationships.

The lack of agency attributed to the mentees in these relationships contributes to misunderstanding, as well as to inequality between the relationship partners. The passive positions of the mentees render them unable to initiate conversation, or to communicate with their mentors about their realities in their own terms.

Conversations between these relationship partners are therefore largely confined to a question-answer format. These mentees are thus unable to express enjoyment or other feelings about the relationships or to ask their mentors for help, should they need it.

These inhibitions contribute to the mentors' lack of insight into the mentees' subjective experiences and particular needs, as well as to their apparent insensitivity of the significance of the relationships for their mentees. Mentees are further unable in this context to contribute to the process of ascertaining the form of help most needed

and most acceptable to them. Rather, the mentors in these relationships attempt to effect changes in their mentees in the areas in which they deem them necessary. Mentees in turn display a disinclination to discuss sensitive topics with their mentors and attempt to block 'helping' conversations they may initiate.

The opposing definitions available to mentors and mentees in these relationships are particularly prominent, in the accounts of the mentors, with regard to the social differences that exist between them. Mentors in these relationships tend to construct the needs and experiences of their mentees in terms of stereotypical notions about the deficiencies of the social group to which the mentees belong. As explained above, these remain unchallenged due to the mentees' passivity and resulting restricted communication, contributing to the mentors' lack of sensitivity and responsiveness in this regard. These mentors further construct their own experiences and competence as mentors in terms of opposite qualities attributed to their own social groups and social environments, rendering their mentees' subjective realities antithetical to their own, and even incomprehensible to them. This further diminishes the potential for empathy between the relationship partners.

The characteristics attributed to the relationship partners in terms of these stereotypes become the relationships' main focus for change. Among the qualities attributed to the mentors in these terms is superior knowledge, both moral knowledge, which they attempt to impart to their mentees in order to teach them "the correct way of doing things", as well as superior knowledge about their mentees' own realities. Along with the mentees' inability to challenge these constructions, the value judgements of the mentors further engender disinclination on the part of the mentees to divulge information, which may trigger scrutiny and pressure to change. In the context of this narrative, certain forms of information are prioritised over others, namely those pertinent to the intended change. Much of the information that the mentees do communicate to their mentors is thus rendered irrelevant, resulting in mentors' lack of awareness of the importance for their mentees of many of the relationships' events. As above, the help offered by the mentors in these terms is rejected by the mentees, who attempt to avoid such interactions or even express anger at their mentors' attempts in this regard. These constructions aggravate the inequality between the

relationship partners. The mentees are seen as 'inherently' inferior to their mentors, their own knowledge and social identities thus devalued.

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Mentors' constructions of themselves as not only possessing, but entitled to knowledge of their mentees, in order that they might effect the desired change, further aggravate the poor communication between the relationship partners. Mentees tend to withdraw, apparently due to their perceptions of the mentors' interest in their behaviour as being excessive. The focus on change further leads mentors to perceive the value of their relationships in terms of observable effects. Not only does this again result in their failure to recognise those elements of their relationships valued by their mentees, but in feelings of inadequacy when relationships fail to achieve success as defined in these terms.

In accounts of relationships dominated by a narrative of 'friendship for its own sake', the focus is on the relationships as mutually valuable and enjoyable interactions in themselves, rather than on their overall purpose to help the mentee. Interactions between the relationship partners are constructed as reciprocal rather than in the unidirectional terms described above. Benefits of these relationships are further seen in terms of the mentors' ability to fulfil particular needs, such as a lack of adult attention in the mentees' lives, rather than generalised needs related to constructions of identity. These particular needs are fulfilled by engagement in the relationship itself, rather than by effecting change in the mentee's attitudes and behaviour. As reciprocal processes these relationships are seen to benefit both mentees and mentors, through their learning about the experiences of each other and through the reward to the mentors of the mentees' affection and appreciation. Agency in these relationships is thus attributed to both parties, mentees becoming more equal participants.

This agency enables the mentees within these friendships to actively contribute to and initiate conversations, thus enabling them to communicate with their mentors about their subjective realities. They are further able to actively enlist the support of their mentors when they desire it, and so contribute to their mentors' understanding of their needs. The help offered by the mentors in these relationships appears thus to be in direct response to their understandings of their mentees' subjective realities and is

gratefully accepted, as indicated by the mentees' expressions of appreciation in their accounts.

The equality and reciprocity in terms of which the relationship partners and their interactions are constructed in these accounts further engenders respect, on the part of the mentors, for their mentees' own knowledge, as well as recognition of their agency and independence in directing their own lives and behaviour. Rather than disseminating knowledge, as in the 'help' relationships, these mentors attempt to provide resources intended to further their mentees' ability to learn for themselves and to make their own decisions. This respect, as well as the mentors' lack of immediate intention to change their mentees, makes for a non-judgmental and non-threatening atmosphere, within which mentees are able to communicate with their mentors about sensitive topics and even about negative aspects of their own behaviour. The increased agency and ability for communication in these relationships further allows mentees to express enjoyment of their relationships and appreciation of their mentors. This enhances the mentors' satisfaction within the relationships and contributes to their efforts to meet consistently with their mentees.

The reciprocity and equality in terms of which these relationships are constructed allows a focus on similarity rather than difference between the relationship partners. This focus enhances the potential for mutual understanding and empathy. Mentors frequently evidence an ability to identify with the experiences of their mentees by remembering similar experiences or feelings in their own lives. Where social difference is acknowledged, due to the reality of its presence in these relationships, it is constructed in ways that either attempt to balance the power between partners or to further mutual understanding.

Meaning for the participants in these relationships is not defined in terms of the relationships' ability to bring about change. Instead, the value of these relationships is constructed in terms of the shared experience of mentor and mentee within their interactions. Mentors are thus not subject to the same frustration and self-criticism that appear within the narratives of 'help', and are more satisfied with their relationships.

This study has thus illuminated the underlying constructions of these relationships and the interactions of these with more overt relationship qualities. It has further elucidated the relationship between social difference and relationship quality, affirming the contention that social differences do matter, but qualifying this by indicating that it is the way in which these are constructed by the relationship partners that determines the nature of their impact on relationships.

This study has further shown how the programme context within which the relationships are located impacts on these relationships, making available particular narratives, within and through which the relationships are enacted. Due to the programme's overall purpose to effect change in the mentees' developmental trajectories, the narrative of 'help' may be the one most readily available to mentors and mentees, in terms of which to construct their relationships. This overall purpose does not, however, necessarily lead to constructions of the relationships in these terms, as evidenced by those who do construct their relationships in terms of a narrative of 'friendship for its own sake'. The success of these relationships appears, in fact, to be dependent on the partners' ability to move beyond the constraints of the narrative of 'help', and to establish more personal relationships, based on equality and the value of the relationship itself.

Limitations

While the small sample size has enabled in-depth exploration of relationship qualities, it has also rendered this study unable to determine whether the trends identified would hold across a larger number of participants. The findings presented here can therefore be seen as no more than one of many possible interpretations of relationship processes specific to the relationships in this study. However, because the findings presented in this study fit so well with what is already known about mentoring relationships, it is clear that the qualities of relationships in the two categories identified here are in keeping with those identified by previous research and associated with satisfied relationships and positive outcomes. Participants' accounts of their relationships were further relied upon as the only source of information about the relationships, the information produced in the interviews therefore remaining unconfirmed by other sources, such as observation of actual interactions between the participants. This

study was unable to link findings about these relationships with outcomes, the impact study of this programme being incomplete at the time this research was conducted. However, it is believed that this study nevertheless offers valuable information about these relationships. In the words of Portelli (Stilles, 2001, p. 2), "Oral sources tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did," thus providing a particular form insight into the processes occurring in these relationships unobtainable through other means.

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APPENDIX

1. Mentee interview guide

So do you like having a Big Sister?

- What do / don't you like about it?
- Do you like your Big Sister?
- What do / don't you like about her?

What's the first thing that usually happens when you and your Big Sister meet?

- What happens then?

Tell me about the last time you saw your Big sister.

What do you and your Big Sister do together?

- What was the best thing you ever did with your Big Sister?
- Can you tell me about that time?
- What was the worst thing you ever did with your Big Sister?
- Can you tell me about that time?
- What other things does she want to do that you don't like doing?

How do the two of you decide what you're going to do together?

- Do you sometimes ask your Big Sister to do something you want to do?
- Can you tell me about last time you asked – what did she say, what did you say?

What do you and your Big Sister talk about most often?

- Can you tell me about the last time you talked about that?
- Who decides what you and your Big Sister are going to talk about?
- Do you ever start talking to your Big Sister about something *you* want to talk about?
- Can you tell me about the last time you did that?
- Is there anything you really like talking to your Big Sister about?
- Can you tell me about the last time you talked about that?

- Is there anything you really don't like talking to her about?
- What happened last time you talked about that?

Are there some things you don't like about having a Big Sister?

Is your Big Sister more like a friend to you, or more like a parent or teacher?

- Can you tell me about the last time when your Big Sister felt like a friend / parent / teacher?

How would you feel if you stopped seeing your Big Sister?

What do you think your Big Sister should do to be a good Big Sister?

Can you tell me about a time your Big Sister did something you really liked?

Can you think of a time you were really glad you had a Big Sister?

Is there anything your Big Sister does that you don't like?

- Can you tell me about the last time that happened?

Can you tell your Big Sister if something's worrying you, or if you have a problem?

- When you have a problem, does your Big Sister help you?
- What did she do the last time you had a problem?

Was there ever a time your Big Sister really let you know she was your friend?

Do you and your Big Sister ever talk about personal stuff?

- What makes your Big Sister a good person to talk to / not a good person to talk to?
- Is there anything you wouldn't talk to her about? You don't have to tell me what it is, just is there anything?
- Can you trust your Big Sister with secrets?

What does your Big Sister do when you do something she doesn't like?

- Can you remember the last time that happened?

What does your Big Sister do if you don't want to talk about something?

- Can you remember the last time that happened?

Cross-gender match:

What's it like having a Big Sister, rather than a Big Brother?

- Would you rather have a Big Brother than a Big Sister?
- Can you remember the last time you felt you would rather have a Big Brother?

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2. Mentor interview guide

Can you tell me, just in your own terms, about your relationship with your Little Brother / Sister?

What usually happens at the beginning of a meeting with your Little Brother / Sister?

- What happens then?
- What kinds of things do you do together when you meet?
- How do you decide what you're going to do on a particular day?
- Can you recount a typical conversation you have had with your Little Brother / Sister, in which you decided what you were going to do that day?
- Does your Little Brother / Sister ever ask you to do particular activities?
- Can you tell me about such an occasion?

Can you recount a typical conversation you have recently had with your Little Brother / Sister?

- What other kinds of things do you talk about?
- Can you remember in those instances which of you initiated those conversations?
- Does it ever happen that your Little Brother or Sister appears not to want to talk?
- How do you deal with that?

Can you describe your reasons and motivations for joining Big Brothers Big Sisters?

What were your expectations for the relationship prior to being matched?

- Has there been anything that has surprised you about how the relationship has actually developed?
- How do you feel about how the relationship has developed?

How do you see your role in your little Brother / Sister's life overall?

- What are your goals for the match?
- Can you describe situations in which you have done something toward attempting to realise these goals?

What are the things you most enjoy about your relationship with your little Brother / Sister?

Are there things you find difficult or challenging in the relationship?

How do you deal with these?

Can you recall a time you felt you were able to be really helpful to your little Brother / Sister?

Has there ever been a time you felt unsuccessful in helping him / her?

Has there ever been a time when there was some sort of difficulty between you and your partner?

- How did you resolve it, if at all?
- How often do situations like that occur?

Can you tell me about a time when things seemed to go particularly well between you and your Little Brother / Sister?

Do you and your Little Brother / Sister talk about his/her problems?

- Can you recount such a conversation?
- Who usually initiates these conversations?
- Why do you think that is?

How would you describe your relationship with your little Brother / Sister's family?

- Could you recount any interaction you have had with his/her family that stands out in your mind?
- How much contact do you have with your Little Brother / Sister's family?

Have there been any times at which you have found the training you received from the programme particularly helpful?

Have there been any times when your caseworker has either intervened or provided support, or failed to do so, that stand out in your mind?

Cross-gender matches:

What has been your experience of mentoring a boy?

Have there been any particular challenges in this regard?

Have there been things you have particularly enjoyed about mentoring a boy?

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